









THE ROOTS OF RELIGION  
IN THE HUMAN SOUL



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THE ROOTS OF  
RELIGION IN  
THE HUMAN SOUL  
By JOHN BAILLIE & &



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MATRI DILECTISSIMAE



## PREFACE

THIS little book consists of five lectures delivered last July before the Midsummer Conference for Ministers and Religious Workers at Union Theological Seminary, New York City. They were written for oral delivery rather than for publication ; but when, acceding to requests that had been made, I decided to publish them, I judged it best to leave them as they were. Apart from minor changes and corrections the first three lectures and the last are printed exactly as they were spoken. In the fourth lecture the two middle sections have been somewhat expanded with a view to securing my position against a type of criticism which, though not represented among my hearers, may very well be represented among my readers. One reason which has kept me from

attempting to recast and expand the whole is that I have for some time been contemplating the publication, possibly at no very distant date, of a larger work in which I hope to deal with some of the same problems, as well as with some other problems, in a more detailed and technical manner.

My cordial thanks are due to the authorities of Union Theological Seminary and the officers of the Conference for their very courteous invitation and welcome ; to the original hearers of the lectures (a truly impressive company) for their too kind and forbearing reception of what I had to say ; to my brother, the Reverend D. M. Baillie, M.A., of Cupar-Fife, Scotland, for his kindness and diligence in reading both manuscript and proofs and suggesting many most necessary corrections ; and to Professor J. Y. Campbell, M.A., of Wooster College, Ohio, for a similar generous service rendered in connection with the proofs at the eleventh hour.

The foot-notes are strictly confined to references ; but to two of the lectures I

have appended brief additional notes which deal in the main with points arising out of my brother's criticisms.

JOHN BAILLIE.

AUBURN, NEW YORK,  
*21st January, 1926.*



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## CHAPTER I

### THE PRESENT SITUATION IN RELIGION

#### I

SOMETHING is happening to religion: something new; something momentous. It is happening in our own time, under our very eyes, and there are not many of us who can feel that we have no part at all in it. I believe that to the historians of the future the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth will seem to have been one of the two or three most critical periods in the whole history of religion in our Western World, and to have witnessed a movement more epochal in character and further-reaching in its effects than even the Protestant

Reformation. Of course, the first sporadic beginnings of this movement stretch far back into earlier chapters of our modern history, perhaps as far back as to the Renaissance and Reformation themselves ; but it is only in our own day that it has assumed such proportions as to affect the life of the people as a whole.

It will be much easier for our children's children than it is for any of ourselves to give a balanced and accurate characterisation of the movement of which I am speaking, and indeed it has been claimed that the discussion of contemporary happenings partakes always more of the nature of gossip than of history. The trouble is, however, that if we put off the attempt to understand ourselves until such time as our understanding can be really complete and impartial, the time will have gone by when it can be of any practical benefit to us. Therefore I must be bold

and, in this first chapter, do all I can to bring into clear relief in your minds the main features of the situation that is at present confronting the Christian Church.

I propose, however, to simplify my task by calling to my help a certain body of literature which has hardly, as it seems to me, received quite the share of attention it deserves at the hands of the theologically-minded. I refer to the very considerable number of books and articles which were written during, or immediately after, the Great War about the religion of the men who were engaged in it. This literature owes its unusual significance to a variety of considerations. If, as in other wars, the armies had consisted of professional soldiers only, our interest in their religious life and ideas would be of a more limited kind, but in reality they were little less than the whole active manhood of our several nations dressed in military clothes :

as has been well said, before the War the "tommy" and the "doughboy" and the *poilu* were all called "the man in the street." Not only, however, was the army's religion the religion of the nation's prime manhood, but it was the religion of that manhood when face to face with the most searching and testing experience that had come to it for long centuries. In their own vernacular, these men were "up against it" as they had never been before. They were thrown back upon the roots of their being, and there was in consequence among them—as one can testify not only from the literature but from one's own long experience with them—a most remarkable and hardly-to-be-exaggerated sense for reality and for the difference between reality and sham. No word, indeed, appears more commonly in the literature of which I am speaking than just this word *reality*. A further important circumstance

is that, in the nature of the case, the conditions of army life presented quite unusual opportunities for what might be called mass-observation. There are many of us who feel that we knew hardly anything about the mind of the people as a whole until we went to France with the Armies, and that we have learnt as little more since our return. But during these few years overseas there was much that a man might read as he ran. That is, in the main, why we have the literature, and it is especially why we have one particularly valuable part of it—I mean the reports based on results obtained by the method of the questionnaire.

Such a questionnaire was distributed among responsible observers in the American Army by a committee working under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association, and the results have been published in a volume entitled

*Religion Among American Men.* The conclusions there arrived at are, if we speak broadly, very parallel to those which resulted from the similar inquiry carried out among the British Army in France, but it cannot be claimed that they are either so definite or so striking. This difference is no doubt due, in considerable part, to a difference in religious temper between the average manhoods of the two countries as mirrored in these reports, but I feel that it is also due in part to a fact which makes the whole American literature on this subject less pointed and significant than the British. In the very nature of the case, the War never struck home to America's heart as it did to the heart of Britain. Her manhood never came to be so representatively engaged in it, nor were the springs of her life so deeply stirred by it. Moreover the opportunities for investigations were of much briefer

duration, as well as being far more limited in scope. In what I am going to say, therefore, I shall be drawing more largely upon the British than upon the American reports; though I shall constantly be referring to the American reports too. I shall draw especially upon the admirable volume called *The Army and Religion*, which contains the results obtained from the questionnaire distributed by the committee working under the joint-convener-ship of Principal David S. Cairns and Bishop Edward S. Talbot. But I shall draw also upon *A Soldier to the Church* by Major W. P. Young, *As Tommy Sees Us* by Rev. A. Herbert Gray, Mr. (now Bishop) Neville Talbot's *Thoughts on Religion at the Front*, *The Church in the Furnace* edited by Canon Macnutt, *God and the Soldier* by Drs. Maclean and Sclater, *Papers from Picardy* by two chaplains—Messrs. Pym and Gordon, and, last but not least, *A Student in Arms*

and *The Church and the Man* by Donald Hankey.

## II

Our first question will naturally be as to the relation of the men to the organised religion of the Christian Churches. The British report answers that "probably four-fifths of the young manhood of our country have little or no vital connection with any of the Churches" and speaks of this fact as "perhaps the most salient factor of our evidence."<sup>1</sup> The estimate finds general corroboration elsewhere. "A large majority of the adult males," writes Mr. Gray, "remain outside all religious organisations, and apparently indifferent to religion."<sup>2</sup> "It would be idle to pretend that the majority of our soldiers are in

*The Army and Religion*, p. 240.

*As Tommy Sees Us*, p. 13.

any vital connection with the Church," write Drs. Maclean and Sclater.<sup>1</sup> The American report indicates a very similar proportion of the men as standing in any vital relation to organised Christianity. "Definite believers," it tells us, "are a small minority."<sup>2</sup>

This, it may be said, we had always realised; but what we can hardly claim to have realised before the War is the attitude adopted towards the Church, and the opinion held about the Church, by the eighty per cent of our manhood who look at it more or less from the outside. What then is that attitude and that opinion? The American and British reports may be said to be at one in finding that, if heads are counted, the most common attitude among the men was one of utter indifference. Sometimes it was a good-natured toleration,

<sup>1</sup> *God and the Soldier*, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> *Religion Among American Men*, p. 13

but more often it was contempt. "The men's indifference is far more serious," writes one of the keenest of these observers, "than open hostility would have been. The Church is simply not a factor in their life."<sup>1</sup> "On the whole," writes another, "the average male Britisher of to-day has not much respect for the Church. He does not like or admire the Church. He does not belong to it, and does not want to. . . . He regards the Church as a negligible quantity. He neither fears nor loves it. . . ."<sup>2</sup> If the evidence is trustworthy, it would seem that this contemptuous indifference has become much less vocal in active criticism in America than it has in Britain. Among the American forces, we are told, conscious criticism was more common among "officers and college men" than among the private

<sup>1</sup> *A Soldier to the Church*, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> *As Tommy Sees Us*, p. 6.

soldiers. But the British observers speak with one voice of "a torrent of criticism so copious and so varied that at first it seems almost impossible to set it forth within manageable limits" <sup>1</sup>—a torrent, moreover, which emanated in at least as great volume from the rank and file as from the officers' mess.

When we come to inquire what the particular counts of this criticism are, we find what I think may be described as an almost complete unanimity in the evidence. The British report speaks of the "surprising unity of the testimony" on this matter, and the correspondence between the British and the American results is no less striking. If we put all the evidence together, one main charge stands out in the very boldest relief, and that is that *there is a lack of reality about the religion of the Christian Church, and a conspicuous unrelatedness to*

<sup>1</sup> *The Army and Religion*, pp. 193-194.

*the real problems of human life.* "If we are to select any one feature of that criticism as central," says the report on the British questionnaire, "it is this, that these men as a whole believe that the Churches are out of touch with reality and out of touch with ordinary humanity. They think them irrelevant to the real business of their lives, antiquated in their ideas and methods, and wanting in vitality and conviction."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Young says poignantly :

"Those who had been brought up to go to Church . . . found in their very first days of service 'up the line' that the whole of this comfortable and dignified system of faith faded most rapidly away. . . . Religion as preached and taught was an unreal thing and the grim realities of war dissipated the unrealities for ever."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Army and Religion*, p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> *A Soldier to the Church*, p. 4.

“ It is sadly true,” says the report on the American questionnaire, that to many of the men the Church seems only

“ a convenient institution for the performance of conventional ceremonies, venerable, respectable, but not much concerned with the real business of life. Much that the Church emphasises men find unimportant, uninteresting . . . and the language of its sermons and liturgies is unintelligible to many.” <sup>1</sup>

“ I am firm in my conviction,” writes another observer, “ that the first thing needed in all the Churches is a new baptism of the spirit of reality.” <sup>2</sup>

There is, I think, only one charge made against the Church that cannot easily be brought under this head of unreality. It is what is called in the British report “ lack of love ” and in the American

<sup>1</sup> *Religion Among American Men*, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *The Army and Religion*, p. 204.

report "inadequacy in moral life." The Church, it was claimed by many, is lacking in the spirit of fellowship. Class-distinctions are allowed to intrude into its life. Nor do Church-members practise what they preach in such a way as to be really impressive to the world. This line of criticism appears also in the literature as a whole, and appears in a way that merits close study, but it is clear that here, as in the more official reports, it occupies what is on the whole a secondary place. The chief count of the indictment is plainly lack of reality rather than lack of love.

It is accordingly of the utmost importance that we should understand as clearly as we can what lies behind this charge of unreality. And I think we can sum up the matter in a sentence. It was just that the soldiers professed to find religion, as represented in the Christian Church, such a highly complicated and intricate affair

that they were at a loss as to its real significance ; they found it difficult to know where its centre of gravity was to be looked for, and where exactly it touched real life. The British report gives first place to the fact that " the doctrinal message is unintelligible. They do not know what it is all about." <sup>1</sup> There are few more frequent words in the literature as a whole than the word *mystification*. " Many men," says Mr. Gray, " find themselves almost hopelessly mystified as they try to approach religion." <sup>2</sup> " Among hindrances," runs another report, " I should class first perplexity. The concepts and facts dealt with in Christianity are so vast, that theological systems bewilder them." <sup>3</sup> " The Church," we are told, " has no intellectual hold on the men " ; " there is now no intellectual compulsion

<sup>1</sup> *The Army and Religion*, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> *As Tommy Sees Us*, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> *The Army and Religion*, p. 201.

to believe the Christian tale."<sup>1</sup> In days gone by, before education had spread to the people as a whole, the man in the street had done little thinking of his own in religious matters. He had accepted traditional authority without question. But now education has done its work ; and it is abundantly clear that a great proportion of the men who made up the Armies in France were doing their own thinking to such an extent at least that blind acceptance of authority, or of tradition, was no longer possible to them. They could not swallow the Church's teaching in the lump ; and in the attempt to think it out afresh for themselves, they did not know where to begin. Besides, there was more than puzzlement in their minds ; there was very often active disagreement too. If there was much in the creeds that they could not understand,

<sup>1</sup> *The Army and Religion*, pp. 187, 197.

there were some things that they understood and rejected. On this point the evidence is abundant, and what is particularly stressed in it is the impression that the Church is clinging, in despite of the assured results of modern knowledge, to the ideas and view-points of a far distant age. "Antiquated" is another very common word all through this literature; and it reveals the existence of a wide-spread suspicion that the knowledge and guidance which the Church has to offer may be largely out of date. Says the British report:

"To sum up a good deal of the evidence, we seem to have left the impression upon them that there is little or no life in the Church at all, that it is an antiquated and decaying institution, standing by dogmas expressed in archaic language, and utterly out of touch with modern thought and living experience."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Army and Religion*, p. 220.

Another very marked source both of bewilderment and of resentment, which is made much of by all the observers, is the confusing variety of Christian teaching in the different denominations. The sum-total of the evidence goes to show, in the first place, that the manhood of Great Britain and America, taken as a whole, has practically no interest in, or understanding of, the points of doctrine and usage which divide Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist, Methodist and Lutheran. This, for example, is the report that comes from sect-burdened America :

“ Although a great majority of the men expressed some church preference when urged to, it is quite clear that the preference was not very emphatic. Even among men who were on the fringe of active membership or attended the services available in the Army the feeling of denominational distinctions appears to have been very slight.

. . . More significant than the attitude of the 'unchurched majority' is the way in which the members of the various Protestant bodies ignored denominational lines under army conditions. In the main they showed little interest in the affiliation of the chaplain and rarely expressed any desire for distinctively denominational ministrations or services." <sup>1</sup>

The American report, it is true, may perhaps be read as implying that the common attitude to denominationalism is rather one of utter indifference than of active resentment, but all the British evidence goes to show that things have gone further than that among the British people. There was a time when the Churches stood opposed to one another on issues of creed and worship which were of vital interest and importance to the common man and roused his keenest enthusiasms;

<sup>1</sup> *Religion Among American Men*, pp. 29-30.

but nowadays these issues have no more than an antiquarian interest to him, and the common man is no antiquary. Yet the Churches still stand apart, kept from reunion and from united testimony by a narrow inner circle in each of them—a circle which is often largely composed of the professional ministry and their households. And the common man feels, often very keenly, that this state of affairs adds immeasurably to the air of unreality, the sense of bewilderment, and the musty intellectual atmosphere with which religion has come to be associated in his mind. I shall quote in full the two paragraphs in which Principal Cairns and Bishop Talbot summarise the British evidence.

*“The charge brought against the Churches of want of sympathy and unity with one another. A review of the whole evidence in this section brings this massively out as one of the*

leading reasons for the alleged failure of the Church to hold the men. The mischiefs wrought by the present divisions of the Churches and the scandal caused by their want of charity to one another are again and again emphasised.

Prominent among those evil results is the confusion which, as we have seen, is wide-spread throughout the Army as to what Christianity really is. It is certainly one of the causes of the 'fog' in the minds of the men as to the essential nature of the Christian religion. That confusion is the inevitable reflex of a divided testimony."<sup>1</sup>

And I cannot resist giving you, in addition, two statements by individual observers which are quoted in support of this conclusion. An officer with a Scottish regiment writes to say:

"The multiplicity of contending creeds and competing Churches, of

<sup>1</sup> *The Army and Religion*, p. 212.

rival sects, bodies and factions, all professing to represent the true Christian faith, bewilder the men, and dispose them to give up religion altogether as not to be taken seriously and too hopeless for a plain man to make anything of ; while the more intelligent of them are baffled by the intellectual complexity in which at the best the books, doctrines, and institutions of Christianity have become involved in modern times.”<sup>1</sup>

And an Assistant Chaplain-General writes : “ In the mind of the men ” Christianity is “ a mosaic of kill-joyism and Balaam’s ass’s ears and Noah, and mothers’ meetings, and Athanasian damns, and the Archbishop of Canterbury at £15,000 a year,” and urges upon us that what is mainly needful is to help men to get through and behind all this to the treasure that lies hidden at the heart of our religion.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Army and Religion*, pp. 217-218.

<sup>2</sup> *The Army and Religion*, pp. 61-62.

## III

Keeping in our minds the impression that we have thus gained of the attitude taken by the men of the armies to the organised religion of the Christian Church, let us now see whether they had any positive standards of conduct and philosophy of life of their own, and any positive faith to guide them through the terrible ordeal that faced them. Here again one cannot but be struck by the remarkable unanimity of the evidence, and I cannot better begin my summary than with the opening words of this section of the British report :

“ It is impossible not to feel the sharpness of the contrast when we turn from the comparative poverty of the religious thoughts and ideals of the men to the wealth of noble virtues which they reveal in their relationship to one another and to

the splendour of heroism which in great multitudes they have shown in loyalty to duty and to Fatherland. This contrast is indeed one of the most impressive features of the whole evidence, and ought to be deeply and thoroughly considered by all who wish to understand the situation.”<sup>1</sup>

If we ask what particular virtues were best loved and most nobly displayed by the men, we have this impressive list given us: comradeship, unselfishness, cheerfulness, sense of duty, courage, sincerity, humility. The list given in the American report is remarkably similar and, I think, even more impressive: courage, unselfishness, generosity, persistent cheerfulness, straightforwardness, humility, loyalty, devotion. Similar lists are to be found in all the books, and what strikes us at once, as it so forcibly struck the observers themselves, is the amazing Christianity of

<sup>1</sup> *The Army and Religion*, p. 125

them. They read like Pauline lists of the fruits of the Spirit! Whereas, actually they are attempts to describe the standards operative in the minds, and to a not wholly discouraging extent effective in the deeds, of a body of men of whom only some twenty per cent stood in any living relation to the Christian Church at all! "The Average Man," says Donald Hankey, "admires courage, generosity, practical kindness, single-minded honesty, persistence in trying to do the right thing"; and he goes so far as to add that "there is not a single feature of the Average Man's ideal which is not part and parcel of the ideal which Jesus Christ taught and embodied."<sup>1</sup>

That, you will say, informs us about the moral code of the men; but what now about their creed, their philosophy of life? The first part of the answer to that question is to be found in the fact that their

<sup>1</sup> *The Church and the Man*, pp. 15, 20

admiration of the ideals of loyalty, generosity, courage and self-sacrifice, and especially their sense of the duty of cheerfulness and what Donald Hankey (in the passage last quoted) called their "persistence in trying to do the right thing," were felt—in a dim way by the men themselves, and very vividly by the lookers-on—to be something more than a mere code of action and, in fact, to contain in themselves a kind of working faith. Mr. Young writes :

" If we could be said to have any philosophy of life at all—and that would have been the last thing we would have thought of calling it—it would all have been comprehended in the one brief rule of ' doing the right thing.' It was with us from the very start, and our life in the army was both based and built on it." <sup>1</sup>

To this faith Donald Hankey gave the

<sup>1</sup> *A Soldier to the Church*, p. 19.

name of "the religion of the inarticulate," eloquently urging upon us his conviction that in it there was the true essence of faith. And nobody has testified to the power of this faith with a more beautiful insight than has Neville Talbot (son of Bishop Talbot and now himself Bishop of Pretoria) in his memorable little book. Deep in the men's hearts, he says,

"is a great trust and faith in God. It is an inarticulate faith expressed in deeds. The top levels, as it were, of their consciousness are much filled with grumbling and foul language and physical occupations; but beneath lie deep spiritual springs, whence issue their cheerfulness, stubbornness, patience, generosity, humility, and willingness to die. They declare by what they are and do that *there is a worth-whileness in effort and sacrifice.*"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts on Religion at the Front*, pp. 8-9. Italics not in the original.

What the men are dumbly aware of, he says again,

“ is that there is something going on in the world which demands primary allegiance, and the putting second of every self-interest. At the Front men hardly know what it is. . . . They only know—a wonderful majority of them—that *something great and righteous wants them and requires of them their help.*”<sup>1</sup>

The religion of the Armies, in fact, was a religion of deeds and of loyalties rather than of clearly formulated beliefs. This is made much of in all the books. “First of all,” says the American report, “they tended to think that religion is primarily a matter of deeds rather than of belief, that belief does not matter much. The feeling is quite prevalent that conduct is all.”<sup>2</sup> This, however, is not to be under-

<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts on Religion at the Front*, p. 55. Italics not in the original.

<sup>2</sup> *Religion Among American Men*, p. 33.

stood to mean that anything like dogmatic agnosticism, not to say atheism, was a common attitude among the men. The evidence is quite unanimous in declaring that "not five men in a thousand have any real doubt of God's existence."<sup>1</sup> It may be said, and many of the reports do say, that the bare reality of God was about all they did believe in, with the exception of "a vague belief in immortality." The writers of the report on the British inquiry, and also Bishop Neville Talbot, make use of the old Stoic and eighteenth-century distinction between natural and positive religion in this connection. The mass of our manhood, they tell us, have natural religion, but not the positive or revealed religion of the Christian or any other Church. I believe myself that this is a distinction which has long been transcended in our modern thinking, and that to re-

<sup>1</sup>*As Tommy Sees Us*, p. 19.

introduce it here does nothing but obscure our perception of the real facts. It seems clear to me that Jesus did not present His Gospel to the men of His time as something different from, and to be added to, their own heart's faith, but rather as its crowning expression. To many of the keenest and most understanding observers the renunciation by these Armies of an articulated creed seemed to be, in good part, the fruit neither of heedlessness nor of mental inertia, but of something much more like a simple, unquestioning trustfulness. Mr. Young is not afraid to sum up the spirit of it in the words of Newman's hymn :

“ Keep Thou my feet ; I do not  
ask to see  
The distant scene ; one step  
enough for me.”

“ We realise at the Front,” he says, “ that the issues of life and death aren't in our hands. . . . But just because we do the

only right thing and realise that everything else is out of our power, there comes to us a peace of mind and content. We take the *one step* and trust the rest. . . . It is the beginning of the peace of God.”<sup>1</sup> “The peace of God,” writes the ‘Student in Arms’ with an identity of sentiment at which once again we can only wonder, “the peace of God which passeth all understanding simply comes from not worrying about results, because they are God’s business and not ours.”<sup>2</sup>

This faith, then, the men of our Armies had and by it they lived. But—and here lies the final tragedy of the evidence—it did not occur to them to think that this might be what that puzzling thing, religion—or Christianity—was after all about. It is from the same two writers that I shall quote passages in support of this conclusion,

<sup>1</sup> *A Soldier to the Church*, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> *A Student in Arms, Second Series* (Pocket Edition), p. 156.

and these two passages must be my last quotations from this whole poignant and appealing literature. The first is from Mr. Young.

“ Nothing ever made me realise how little the preaching and teaching of Christianity had sunk into men’s minds and been understood, until I saw men living in the Christ-spirit and not recognising it as such.” <sup>1</sup>

The second is from Donald Hankey.

“ The soldier, and in this case the soldier means the working-man, does not in the least connect the things that he really believes in with Christianity. . . . The men really had deep-seated beliefs in goodness, and the only reason why they did not pray and go to communion was that they never connected the goodness in which they believed with the God in Whom the chaplains said they ought to believe.” <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Soldier to the Church*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *A Student in Arms*, pp. 108-109.

## IV

I hope that in trying to compress within the compass of a single chapter the substance of so much living experience and penetrating observation and fine-tempered writing, I have not entirely robbed them of their impressiveness and power, or of the authority which the reader cannot but feel to attach to so considerable a volume of unanimous testimony. Shall I now be still bolder and attempt to put the main drift of it into one or two sentences? What we have here, then, is the plain discovery that some eighty per cent of the prime manhood of Great Britain and America stand in little or no living relation to organised Christianity, and that behind their indifference to it there is a strong and rising tide of feeling that religion, as it is presented to them in the Christian Church, is out of touch with reality and with the

real business of life. It is, they feel, a hopelessly intricate maze of doctrine in which they cannot find their way, and to which they do not readily turn for help in time of need. Some of it seems to them to be definitely out of date, belonging to an age long dead. The points in dispute between rival sectaries of the Church mean nothing to them, but on the contrary go far to increase their vague but growing suspicion that the whole affair has little or nothing to do with them. Yet those who feel thus are no reprobates, but—and I am indulging after all in one more quotation (from Mr. Gray)—“men whose splendid qualities often bring tears to the eyes, men capable of endurance, kindness, and deliberate self-sacrifice in a great cause”<sup>1</sup>—men, in a word, whose loyalties, at least, are wonderfully like the loyalties of Christ. Nor are they altogether without

<sup>1</sup> *As Tommy Sees Us*, p. 9

faith ; faith at least in duty and in the rightness of doing the right thing ; faith that "something great and righteous wants them and requires of them their help." In such a faith they find true support. But they do not know how essentially Christian are such faith and loyalty, nor do they think of these things as having much connection with what is commonly known as religion. Such, in broadest outline, is the situation we have here before us.

I may perhaps be allowed to add that, as concerns myself, every main point in this testimony finds ample support in my own experience. Some of the points, indeed, my personal experience would have led me to state in even stronger terms than those in which they have been stated here ; but I have thought it wiser to rely upon the published literature. Yet I cannot refrain from recording the fact

that the most saddening of all the realisations which one observer took home with him from the zone of the Armies was just this realisation that there were thousands upon thousands of soldiers eager—often quite pathetically eager—for the least ray of light upon the great puzzle of life, who were nevertheless instinctively sceptical of the ability of the Church's chaplains to offer them any such thing.

## V

These, then, are the facts. And they are the facts, as I need hardly again remind you, not merely of this or that army's religion in time of war, but of the essential religious situation with which Western culture is to-day faced. Indeed, I might, if I cared, have illustrated that situation in quite other ways, as, for instance, from a study of the standpoints

reflected in the general literature of our age, or from the problems now present to the minds of Christian missionaries in many foreign lands. I have simply chosen the approach to the subject that lay nearest to my own hand.

And now what are we to do about this state of affairs ?

There are some among us who think that what we need is a new religion. Christianity, they say, has been long outmoded, as indeed have all the religious systems of antiquity, and what we need in their places is something which, being grounded four-square upon the discoveries of modern science, will be very radically different from all that has been called religion in the past. A few, indeed, would go further and would claim that in the future we must do without religion altogether, making jettison of God Himself and of all the helps and hopes which are

associated with His name, and living only by the dry and scanty light of a thoroughly up-to-date scientific outlook. My own judgment of the situation is of a profoundly different kind. It seems to me that human nature is fundamentally the same in every age and that its deepest needs will always find satisfaction in the same things. Those who think that their souls are cast in another mould than were the souls of the ancient Hebrews or Greeks or of those Romans who yielded up their Empire to the power of the Christian message, think so only because they know little of history and less of their own hearts. Faith in God is as much a necessity of life to the modern man as it was to the rudest of his ancestors, and, fundamentally, it is the *same* faith in Him that must satisfy them both. We do right to be proud of the spectacular advances which science has made within our own time, but we do

wrong to cheat ourselves with the belief that these advances have been of such a nature as to provide us with any other foundation for the life of our spirits than was available to the men of olden time. The best scientists are those who take their most assured results with the greatest degree of caution and reserve, and who know better than to mistake working guesses for final certainties. Yet not on working guesses, nor on cautious, provisional syntheses, nor on opinions so "up-to-the-minute" as to be out of date the next minute, can the spirit of man ever build for itself a safe habitation ; but only on certain deep and elemental convictions of its own, which, because they were firmly established before science was born, can hardly be affected by the ever-changing surprises of its meteoric career.

What our generation needs, in truth, is not to have the old religion replaced but

to have it re-interpreted. Religion, as we know it in the world, is a thing of infinite variety, of endless ramification, of exceeding intricacy. Even Christianity may seem to be the name, not of a simple view of life, but of a vast and complex historical development; and there are many who have lost their way in its maze of doctrines and of sects. That is the real root of our trouble and I believe there is only one way of meeting it—we must find our way back to the fountain-head. We must make re-discovery, and help others to make re-discovery, of the true centre of gravity in this accumulated mass of tradition. We must dig down afresh to its deep foundations in human experience. In the literature, from which I have been quoting, much is made of the need of *simplification* in religion. “The Call for Simplicity” is the title of one of the chapters in Mr. Gray’s book, and there

is in it a strong sense of the unwieldiness which contact with the grim realities of those days so often revealed to exist in our traditional theologies. It is true that if we make too much of a word like simplicity, there will be some who will be afraid lest this should mean that, by too severe a process of pruning, something of the rich harvest of past experience should be lost to us. From some points of view I understand this fear and sympathise with it; yet I am quite sure on the other hand that, when Christianity first came into the world, one of its outstanding assets was a kind of simplicity which it nowadays too often lacks. It is quite plain to me, as I shall have occasion to repeat in a later chapter, that one of the things which Jesus did to the religion of His forefathers was just to simplify it, to disburden it of a great deal of unnecessary weight which it had long been carrying. His Gospel

was a Gospel for plain men. The other religious teachers of His day loaded the plain man with burdens grievous to be borne, but Jesus' yoke was easy and His burden was light ; and the common people heard Him gladly. All this is true ; and yet I should at the same time agree that the kind of simplification which is here chiefly in question is rather a clarification or disentanglement of the tradition than a mere lopping or pruning of any of its richness. There are better ways of simplifying than by whittling down. The most elaborate thing may be made simple and intelligible, without any sacrifice of its fulness of detail, if only we can discern the pattern of it, or can catch the spirit of it, or can discover its beating heart.

Can we then discover the beating heart of religion ? Well, I dare not promise you too much, but we can at least make

the attempt. In this short book I wish to raise in your minds the question as to what religion really and essentially is and where in the human soul lies the ever-bubbling fountain from which it springs. I wish also to raise the question as to what Christianity essentially is and what its particular message must be understood to be. I believe that if we can answer these questions at all truly, we shall find that religion, far from being out of touch with reality, is made of the very stuff of our most real life and has direct and vital bearing upon our most practical problems ; and that in Christianity it does but receive a fresh and bountiful baptism in the waters of living experience. And perhaps we shall find also that such men as those who, for our sakes, went gladly into battle with a simple-hearted faith in the rightness of doing the right thing, had more of the root of true religion in them than they

themselves knew, and were not as far as some traditional formulæ would make them seem from the Kingdom of Christ.

## CHAPTER II

### WHAT RELIGION IS—SOME MISUNDER- STANDINGS

#### I

WHAT is religion? What are its roots in the human soul? And whence does it derive the light by which it lives?

These are the questions that we must now raise in our minds. To some of you they may seem, at first sight, to be questions that are very easy to answer. Religion is so familiar a part of your lives that you may feel there should be no special difficulty in saying what the real essence of it is. Yet, if time allowed, I should like to try with you a simple experiment of a kind that is now very familiar to psychologists. I should like to pronounce the one word

“religion” before each of you in turn, and ask you all to tell me what the first idea or image is which it suggests to your minds. I am sure (for the experiment is one which has been tried before) that the associative responses called forth in your minds by that apparently simple word would be quite surprisingly various. One of you might answer “a totem-pole,” another “a red-robed cardinal,” another “the great façade of a Gothic cathedral,” another “the sprinkling of water on a baby’s head,” another “the experience of conversion,” another the “*Shorter Catechism*,” and still another “the Doctrine of the Trinity.” To some of your minds there would be suggested some ritual act, to others some ecclesiastical organisation, to others some social gathering, to others some philosophical problem, and to still others some deep stirring of the emotions. Dean Inge has recently, and I think very

aptly, compared religion to those chemical elements which are never found in a pure state, but only in combination with other elements from which it is very difficult to segregate them. The comparison very well illustrates the difficulty of our present problem, which is just that of segregating the true and abiding and indispensable essence of religion from the ever-changing multitude of forms which it assumes in its necessary alliances with the other elements of our life. The problem is one which has long agitated the history of human thought, but there has perhaps never been an age when a clear answer to it was so much of an imperative, practical necessity as it is to-day. There seems, as we saw in the last chapter, no other way to dissolve the air of unreality and practical irrelevancy and musty effete-ness with which religion is surrounded in the minds of so many of our contemporaries,

than by exhibiting its true inward nature in the clearest light we can. In this chapter I shall deal with some views as to the nature of religion which, though they have often been put forward, and are therefore likely to contain some partial truth, yet seem to me to be in the end seriously misleading. In the next I shall try to put before you what I believe to be a truer view.

## II

Let us begin, as the history of systematic thought itself began, with the view which finds the essence of religion to consist in *philosophical speculation*. This is what has come to be known as the rationalistic theory of religion. Rationalism might be defined as the tendency to look upon science as the only source of reliable knowledge which is open to us; and the

rationalist's attitude to religion is simply to assume that if it is to have any light at all, it must get its light from science—some would say from physics, biology and psychology, others from that more speculative extension of scientific method which is called philosophy or metaphysics. According to this view, religion first made its appearance in the world as a very primitive explanatory theory of the nature of things, and was thus the lineal precursor of exact science and academic philosophy ; and it still lives on in the world as a kind of popular metaphysic. But the educated man will naturally be anxious to avail himself of the fuller and clearer knowledge which science proper has now put at his disposal, and will consequently submit his traditional religious beliefs to be tested in the light of the latest scientific and metaphysical results. He will find, the rationalists tell us, that much of what he

has been taught in the name of religion is scientifically untenable, or at least unverifiable; but other doctrines he will find to be in accord with the teachings of science, and these he will continue to believe, having now at last found for them a solid scientific foundation. It is clear that on this view there is no real difference between religious belief on the one hand and science and metaphysics on the other. In the former, no doubt, our knowledge is given a more practical turn and application than in the latter, but it is not (we shall be told) derived from any different source; for there is no other source. There is no avenue to reliable knowledge but the avenue of scientific method; and what that avenue is, any text-book of logic (which is the theory of scientific method) will tell you—it consists in the systematic observation of facts and in using the Law of Cause and Effect to

draw inferences from the facts thus observed. Here is how Mr. Lowes Dickinson, who is a fair example of a modern rationalist, puts it :

“ Only perception, and inference, and logic, only, in the broadest sense, science—under which, for the moment, I will ask to be allowed to include philosophy—can teach us anything about the Universe and our place in it ; can teach us whether or no there be anything corresponding with what we have called God ; whether or no the individual soul survives death ; whether or no the process of things moves towards a good end.”

“ Religious truth is attainable, if at all, only by the method of science.”<sup>1</sup>

This way of regarding religion has obtained such wide currency in our Western World that it is worth while looking a little closely into its history. If we wish to find the

<sup>1</sup> *Religion: A Criticism and a Forecast* (New York, 1905), pp. 52–53, p. viii.

real origins of it, we must go back to the very earliest beginnings of Western science. When science and philosophy were born among the Greek thinkers of the sixth century before Christ, they found religion, of course, not only already in existence, but with the marks of having been in existence from time immemorial. What explanation, then, were they to give of religion? How was it related to themselves, and how were its "gods" related to the objects of their own research? The Greek teachers answered, with almost one voice, that religion and science cannot ultimately be distinguished, and that therefore only as much of the traditional religion can be retained as science is able to verify by its own newly-discovered methods. Religion, they said, has lived in the past by "faith" or "opinion," but now it must live by the light of expert speculative inquiry. The earliest of these teachers all

seem to have believed that what religion meant by "gods" was simply the ultimate quasi-chemical elements of which they were now discovering the whole world to be composed. And even the greatest of them, Plato and Aristotle, were convinced that the true way of assuring oneself of the existence and goodness of God was by means of arguments drawn from the philosophical theory of knowledge on the one hand and mathematical astronomy on the other; and Plato at least was convinced that equally strict scientific arguments were available in support of the belief in a future life; but the rest of traditional belief, they said, must be regarded as mere "myth."<sup>1</sup>

This Greek view of things was, as you know, adopted by the Christian scholars of the Middle Ages with one very important and far-reaching addition. These scholars willingly embraced the notion that religion

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1074b.

is not to be distinguished from philosophical knowledge, both having as their common aim the attainment of the whole truth about the Universe. They believed with Aristotle that religion may legitimately rely upon science and philosophy for the confirmation of certain articles of its creed, and they were in essential agreement with him as to what the articles were which could be thus confirmed. Where they differed was in their firm belief in the availability of another and utterly different source of knowledge which was every whit as reliable as science and philosophy, and which, besides offering additional confirmation of those articles of creed which science and philosophy were able to reach in their own way, introduced us to a great many other articles which science and philosophy could not reach at all. This other source was revelation, and by revelation the mediævals meant the

communication of information from God to man by a means so direct that it could be open to no doubt or question, but must be accepted *in toto* without regard to its inherent reasonableness. On this view, two wholly different sources of knowledge about the structure of the Universe are open to us—reason and revelation; scientific and philosophical inquiry on the one hand, and the sacred tradition on the other. The simpler articles of our creed (such as the existence and unity of God, the Ptolemaic cosmology, and the immortality of the soul) we can get from either source; the more advanced articles (like the Trinity of God, the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of the last things) we can get from the sacred tradition alone. This position is what is known as the mediæval synthesis, and it is the most widely influential synthesis of the respective claims of religion and science that the world has

ever known. We might characterise it as the perfectly harmonious marriage of an exceedingly high-and-dry rationalism with a no less naïve traditionalism.

Into the particular scientific proofs of God's existence which were current among the mediæval teachers I need not here enter. You are all familiar with them. In essence they were the same as those of Plato and Aristotle and as those still current in certain quarters to this day. We need only note that, in the words of a distinguished authority on this period, "all genuine arguments for God's existence take their start, according to St. Thomas (Aquinas), from sensible facts of which God is inferred to be the cause";<sup>1</sup> which is to say that they follow the ordinary method of inductive science.

The mediæval synthesis was no doubt

<sup>1</sup> C. C. J. Webb, *Studies in the History of Natural Theology*, p. 238.

very water-tight while it lasted and, as you know, it is still the orthodox position of the Roman Church. But as early as the sixteenth century it began to spring a serious leak. About that time inquiring minds began to have difficulty about the implicit and unreasoning acceptance of the sacred tradition, and from then onwards there arose in Northern Europe a strong and growing body of suspicion as to the authenticity of this "special" revelation which the mediævals believed to be embodied in the words of the Bible, the decisions of the Councils, the opinion of the Early Fathers, and the definitions of the Roman Pontiff. What was the result? The result, among a large and ever-growing company of thinkers, was simply to set aside altogether this second element in the mediæval synthesis—revelation—, and to leave the first—scientific and philosophical investigation—standing alone once more,

## III

Such, then, in very brief outline, is the lineage of that modern rationalism which regards religion as being essentially a matter of metaphysical speculation and counsels it accordingly to place its sole reliance upon the results of scientific and metaphysical research. It is a view which is still widely current among us, and therefore it is the more necessary that, before passing judgment against it, we should make full acknowledgment of the measure of truth which it contains. I think we shall all be prepared to recognise the justice of the observation from which rationalism starts—namely, that religion and metaphysics both alike claim, in some sort, to give us knowledge about the ultimate nature and meaning of the Universe. This being true, it seems likely that the two bear some direct relation to one another ; and so we can readily understand

how metaphysicians should be led into believing that this relation is one of simple dependence on the part of religion, and that in all matters of religious belief it is the metaphysician, as metaphysician, who must be given the last word. And yet, current as this view still is in certain quarters, I believe that no movement of thought has been more characteristic of the last century generally, and of our own generation in particular, than a steadily-growing sense of the difficulty and absurdity of any such position. Rationalism as a whole has been subjected to a severer and more prolonged fire of criticism during the last century than ever before in its long history, and the rationalistic interpretation of religion has, I think, come in for even more than its proportionate share of attention. What, then, is the case against it? I shall try to sum it up as briefly as I can.

I think what the ordinary man—and that means everybody but a few specialists—feels when he is told that religion is a matter of philosophical speculation is that, if this be really true, then religion is not for him. The majority of us feel no obligation to concern ourselves either with the quickly-shifting panorama of current scientific theories or with the numerous and conflicting philosophical theories that are at any one moment in the field. The interests of a few of us may lie that way, and it is well and good that they should; but the interests of the majority of mankind must always lie in other and more practical directions. Tell the man in the street that religion is the same thing as metaphysics, and he will feel that he can, with a perfectly clear conscience, leave it altogether on one side.

This difficulty the rationalists have some-

times tried to meet by pointing out that there is no need for the ordinary man to be an expert in philosophy, any more than there is need for him to be an expert in medicine. As he accepts his medicine from the trained physician, so may he not accept his religious beliefs from the trained philosopher?

This suggestion may at first sight seem reasonable enough, and yet, if we examine it closely, we shall find it to be nothing less than preposterous. We shall all feel, I think, that there are at least two difficulties, each of them separately insuperable, which stand in the way of our acceptance of it. The first is the difficulty of knowing which philosopher to believe. It is an undeniable fact that there is no branch of learned inquiry where a consensus of experts is so completely lacking as it is in metaphysics. I will go as far as to say that to ask the man in the street to allow his life to be guided

by the received conclusions of academic metaphysics is to use words altogether without meaning; because there are no such received conclusions. Think only—to pursue the matter no further—of the apparently perennial opposition of naturalism and idealism, and you will see the quandary in which the non-expert must at once be placed. I do not mean to imply that there is anything discreditable to the philosophers in this state of matters. I do not think there is. It seems to me quite natural that learned men should be unanimous about small matters of detail, like the effect of certain drugs, or the classification of animal species, or the laws of thermo-dynamics, while there should be no such unanimity about the larger issues of the nature of the Universe as a whole. Indeed some of the very greatest thinkers have taken the view that scientific and metaphysical research, as such, can never

hope to answer our ultimate questions about the nature of things as a whole ; and I am not sure that they are not right. But at all events it is clear that as the scientists approach these ultimate questions the sureness of their step, as well as their ability to keep in step with one another, seems proportionately to decrease. And there is another feeling which, as I think, we are likely to have in this whole matter. We cannot help suspecting that what divides the experts, as they face these highest slopes of the mountain of knowledge, and especially what divides the metaphysicians into the two great traditional camps of idealism and naturalism, is not any difference in scientific or philosophic perception as such, but rather the presence or absence of a simple religious faith in their hearts from the beginning. If there is any truth in this suspicion, then it is clearly absurd to try to base our religious faith

upon the conclusions of philosophers, seeing that these conclusions may turn out to be themselves based upon nothing else than religious faith.

Indeed I should say that it is just here that we strike the small measure of truth, as well as the much larger measure of untruth, which there is in the idea that religion consists in philosophical speculation. If we take philosophy in its widest sense, not as a mere continuation of scientific method into a more speculative realm, but as an attempt to embrace all our knowledge, from whatever quarter received, in a single synoptic view, then indeed it cannot and should not be dissociated from religious faith. Only the truth would then be, not that faith draws upon philosophy for its support, but, on the contrary, that philosophy draws in no small part upon religious faith.

But there is a second, and an even more

insurmountable, objection to the proposal that the man in the street should take his religious creed at second-hand from the philosophers, and that is simply that religion is far too vital and important a thing to be taken at second-hand from anybody. There is a great deal of knowledge that we must all of us be content merely to accept from those who know and have seen ; but surely in religion, if nowhere else, we feel that we must know and see for ourselves. Second-hand geography may be perfectly good geography. Second-hand faith is just not faith at all. The rationalists have been anxious to rid us of the necessity of resting our soul's faith on the authority of Pope, apostle and prophet, Church Council and Sacred Book ; and their anxiety is well founded ; but if the only alternative they offer us is an equally blind acceptance (and for most of us it must be blind) of the authority of scientist and

metaphysician, I am not sure that we are not worse off than we were before. Surely there is something quite grotesque about this idea of going to the scientists for our religion. There are many tight corners in life when you and I are glad enough to have the scientists at our elbow ; but where the soul's fundamental faith is concerned, I, for one, would still prefer to put my trust in a Jeremiah or a Paul or an Augustine or a Francis. Of course some rationalists will protest, in their superior way, that there is no need for any man to take his philosophy entirely at second-hand. Every man is a philosopher in his own little way and degree, though it is only the scientifically-trained expert who can hope to possess a philosophy that is either secure in its foundations or reliable in its results. This explanation, however, does not meet our difficulty in the least ; for it would still remain true that a really luminous and

robust religious faith would be in the possession of philosophers alone. And that is a notion which is not only in the last degree unwelcome and incongruous but is also contradicted by all our experience of life. No view of religion can possibly be correct which makes it depend on science or learning of any kind, because nothing is more certain than that the world's great men of faith—those members of our race whose religious insight has been surest and clearest and bravest—have, as often as not, been men of little learning and less science. As an old teacher of my own<sup>1</sup> used to say, and it is a sentiment which might be taken as the first axiom of any true theology: “The basis of our faith must be such as to be grasped in the same independent fashion by learned and unlearned, and by each for himself.”

<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Herrmann. See his *Communion with God*, English translation, Revised Edition, p. 76

To sum up still more briefly, then, we might say that although religion has something in common with metaphysics, it cannot possibly be just another name for metaphysical speculation as such; first, because such speculation is largely remote from the ordinary man's interests and beyond his powers; secondly, because even if it were in line with his interests, and within his powers, it could yield neither the degree nor the kind of certainty necessary for religion to feed upon; and thirdly, because that kind of knowledge which only scientifically trained philosophers can have in perfection is obviously not what has been known in the world as religious faith.

## IV

What then is the essence of religion, if it is not philosophical speculation? Well,

at the opposite extreme from the rationalists, we have, during the last century and a quarter, had the romanticists. Romanticism, as you know, is a movement which came into being about the beginning of the nineteenth century in direct opposition to the rationalism which had had its heyday during the previous hundred years; and what it did was to swing the pendulum of thought about as far in the opposite direction as it could be made to go. Indeed we here seem to come upon a very significant fact, and that is that the men of our time have, for the most part, found it much easier to see the defects of the old rationalism than to know exactly what to put in its place. Perhaps, however, we may say that the most characteristic form in which romanticism has appeared has been the attempt to oust reason altogether from its ancient throne and put *feeling* in its place. At the beginning of the nineteenth century

this substitution of feeling for reason was represented in many different spheres—in poetry, in music, in ethics, in political theory. Here we are concerned only with its application to the religious problem ; and the great name in this region is that of Friedrich Schleiermacher, whose view it was that religion consisted, not in anything like philosophical theorising, but purely in feeling, and particularly (as he said) in the feeling which we have of being absolutely dependent on something other than ourselves.

It is worth while to follow this great thinker—in many ways the greatest of all modern students of religion—a little more into the details of his view. It is quite a mistake, he tells us, to look upon religion as a child of the reason. In itself it has nothing to do with reason, or with thinking, or with any kind of ideas or beliefs. Far deeper than any of these it strikes its roots

into the underlying region of immediate feeling. According to traditional psychology, as you know, our mental life has three sides to it—knowing, feeling and willing ; and Schleiermacher's contention is that, just as the first of these gives rise to science and the third to morality, so the second—feeling—has given rise to religion. The awareness of God's reality is thus not a knowledge of Him reached by reflection, but an immediate feeling of dependence upon Him. Religion is “a sense and taste for the Infinite” ; “a feeling of absolute dependence, which is the same as to say a feeling of being in touch with God.” What is called religious knowledge is, on this view, a purely secondary affair, and is no more than an attempt on the part of later reflection to describe what one has already felt. It is theology, not religion ; and religion must always precede theology and is entirely possible without it. Not even

the idea of God is necessary to religion itself: all that is necessary to it is that "the Deity should be present to man in feeling."<sup>1</sup> You will see at once how complete is the break which romanticism here makes with rationalism. The latter had identified religion with speculative philosophy; the former now identifies it with an immediate stirring of the soul which precedes the earliest beginnings of reflective thought. The one had grounded our belief in God's reality on difficult theistic arguments drawn from astronomy (Plato), biology (Paley), or epistemology (Berkeley); the other now grounds it on the feeling that we have of Him in our souls.

This view of religion as consisting in pure feeling merits our greater attention because, since about the year 1890, it has been given

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the second speech ("The Nature of Religion") in Schleiermacher's *Speeches on Religion*, of which there is an English translation by Dr Oman: also the introduction to *Der christliche Glaube*.

a new lease of life by those American writers who have occupied themselves with what they have called the "Psychology of Religion." The majority of these writers follow Schleiermacher's view almost to the letter; yet, as I think, without ever attaining to so clear and rigidly-argued a presentation of it as is to be found in his pages; and also without much apparent awareness of the fact that they are here re-traversing comparatively old ground. This, for instance, is what William James, the intellectual father of this movement, writes:

"The intellectualism in religion which I wish to discredit pretends to . . . construct religious objects out of the resources of the logical reason alone, or of logical reason drawing rigorous inference from non-subjective facts."

Whereas in reality,

“ Feeling is the deeper source of religion, and philosophic and theological formulæ are secondary products, like translations of a text into another tongue.”

All religious ideas, dogmas and creeds are thus intellectual constructions which

“ pre-suppose immediate experiences as their subject-matter. They are interpretative and inductive operations, operations after the fact, consequent upon religious feeling, not co-ordinate with it, not independent of what it contains.”<sup>1</sup>

## V

What then are we to say about this view? Well, we shall perhaps all feel some degree of sympathy with the intention of it. At the very least it is a brave attempt

<sup>1</sup> These passages will all be found in James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 431-433.

to provide a way of escape from the barren and arid confines of a purely rationalistic outlook. But the trouble is that the escape it offers seems, on closer examination, to be only into a land of fog and cloud.

The fact is that religion has come to a sorry pass if it is driven to take refuge in nothing more solid than our feelings. Feeling is indeed an entirely necessary element in all noble forms of life, but feeling by itself has neither nobility nor dignity, neither usefulness nor value. Thought is the proper guide of feeling, and it is only so far as feeling is held in leash by intelligent insight and reflection that it is worthy of any measure of respect at all. Feeling that has not been subjected to the surveillance and control of such reflective insight we call sentimentality ; and sentimentality is as little admirable, and as much a thing to be avoided, in religion as in any other activity engaged in

by intelligent beings, whether music or poetry, politics or economics. Furthermore, if we relegate religion to the realm of mere feeling, we are cutting it off from all claim to objective truth. That is just the trouble with sentimentality, that it lacks reality. Our feelings are merely our feelings, and that is all about them. It is the cognitive activity of mind that alone puts us in touch with a reality which is other and greater than ourselves ; the affective aspect (which is the psychologist's name for feeling) is the very hall-mark of subjectivity. "Oh, it's merely his feeling !" we say, when we wish to discredit anybody's opinion. As Wilhelm Herrmann used to put it, "To say that religion is merely feeling is much too like what its worst enemies have always said about it to be anything but a very left-handed apologetic." And indeed the truth is that in withdrawing our soul's faith into this purely private sphere, we are certainly

sheltering it from the criticism of reflective intelligence, but only at the cost of giving our thinking contemporaries a perfectly good reason for ignoring it altogether.

Yet I should not like to leave the matter there. It would not be wise to content ourselves with showing that those who identify religion with mere feeling are doing serious disservice to religion ; for there are some to whom such disservice would be in no wise unwelcome. Let me therefore add that besides doing disservice to religion these theorists are also doing considerable violence to psychological fact. In reality there is no such thing as mere feeling. Pure feeling, as somebody has said, is pure nonsense. If you consult any history of psychology, you will see that what characterised the psychology of romanticism was just this attempt to place feeling deeper down, as it were, in our mental life

than knowledge and will. Of the three elements of mentality, it was argued, "feeling alone is primordial," and knowledge on the one hand and will on the other arise out of this feeling as secondary developments. This was the psychological doctrine on which Schleiermacher was building, but it is one that has long ago fallen a prey to advancing science. It is now recognised that no feeling can be conceived as existing prior to all cognition. You can never have a feeling which is not a feeling of something. Feeling, indeed, is nothing but our subjective response to external stimuli, and we must first be cognitively aware of the stimuli before we can be affected by them to pleasure or pain. As Professor James Ward puts it in his *Psychological Principles*, "We have not *first* a change of feeling and *then* a change in our sensations, perceptions and ideas; but, these changing, change of feeling

follows."<sup>1</sup> This being so, it is clear that feeling can never be independent of knowledge. *When you get behind knowledge, you get behind feeling too.*

And if this be true of all feeling, it seems doubly true of religious feeling. For it would seem that this kind of feeling is dependent, not on cognition merely (which might mean only sense-perception), but on nothing less than reflective intelligence. I think common-sense recognises this. Surely it is because we are intelligent beings that we are religious beings. Non-rational animals are not religious, but, as far as we know, all animals which are rational are religious too. Hardly any kind of feelings, therefore, are more obviously mediated by the ideas present in our minds than are our religious feelings. When we see anybody moved to deep emotion, the question raised in our minds is always what has moved

<sup>1</sup> *Psychological Principles*, pp. 41-45.

him ; and if it is a truly religious emotion that he is displaying, common sense is enough to tell us that what has moved him is not a mere bodily sensation, nor a sight or sound, but some idea in his mind. I said above that when you get behind knowledge, you get behind feeling too : I say now that *when you get behind religious ideas, you also, and by the same sign, get behind religious feelings.*<sup>1</sup>

## VI

This appeal from reason to feeling is the most characteristic and classical form in which the theology of romanticism has appeared, but it is by no means the only form. Indeed I should say that the essence of this theology is capable of being stated without reference to feeling at all. What characterises the romanticist theologians is just the attempt to find the roots of

<sup>1</sup> See Note on page 87.

religion somewhere in the mind *below the level of reflective thought*; and there is hardly any mental element or activity lying in this pre-rational region that has not, at some time or another during the last hundred years, been exploited in the interests of anti-rationalism. I shall here mention two of these.

There are some among us who, instead of using the language of feeling to explain religion, would use the language of perception. Religion they would tell us, is, in essence, neither thought nor feeling so much as immediate vision. It is possible, they say, to attain to a direct perception of God's presence, and that is surely all the foundation that religion needs. It has thus been suggested that psychology should recognise a special religious sense. "Those who know God," says Coventry Patmore, a typical writer of this school, "know that it is quite a mistake to suppose that there

are only five senses.”<sup>1</sup> It is natural that the literature of mysticism should be drawn upon in support of this type of view, and, as a matter of fact, nothing is more striking than the tendency of recent American writers on religion to appeal for their subject-matter, not to the normal religion of Jesus and Paul, Augustine and Luther, but to the more emotional and ecstatic and, as one cannot help saying, pathological type of piety represented by the extremer mystics.

Is there, then, such a thing as religious vision? Is it true that God is ever immediately present to the mind of man? I should myself be willing to answer “yes” to these questions, if you allowed me to go on at once to add that it is not to our *senses* that He is thus present but to our thoughts. But what a vital difference this addition makes! It is not a special

<sup>1</sup> *The Rod, The Root and The Flower*, p. 43

sense that will help us here, and the language of perception—even the language of the beatific vision itself—can only mislead us. God is a Spirit, and those who know Him truly know Him, not by sensuous, but by spiritual means. In religion we have to walk, not by sight, but by insight; which is the same as to say by faith. And I would add this. Where the religious man differs from the non-religious man is not, if we speak accurately, that he has seen something which the other has not. God is not merely a stark fact that we may or may not have happened to notice, or that may or may not have happened to come our way; nor are there any objects present to the saint's perception which are not part of the common experience of us all. What is true is rather that what the saint has seen means something different to him, something immeasurably more. And why? The answer is tremendously significant,

and I shall ask you to keep it in your minds against my next chapter. Any really sound mystic will tell you what it is. It is that he has a purer heart. "The pure in heart shall see God."

About one other and very modern variety of romanticist theology I would speak a single word. During the last twenty or thirty years it has become very fashionable to appeal, not to feeling, nor to mystical vision, but to what is very vaguely called religious experience. Religion, some writers will tell you, is a matter, not of thought and reflection, but of experience. Religious beliefs, they will say again, are but secondary products of religious experience, and have their only true ground and basis in such experience. Of writers of this school I think I have but one question to ask: what religious experience could there possibly be, or be imagined, that did not already contain a belief as an integral part

of its own being ? I should say myself that the most fundamental and primordial of all religious experiences, and perhaps in a sense the only experience that is as such religious, is just the experience of believing, the experience of faith in God, the experience of casting oneself in utter trust upon His love.

## VII

There then—in the sentimental, mystical<sup>1</sup> and experience theologies—we have three varieties of romanticism. Where they are all at one is in their endeavour to escape the absurdities of rationalism by relegating religion to some pre-rational region of our mental life. But they fall into absurdities of their own ; and to them all we can but oppose our firm persuasion that no interpretation of religion can be worthy of its great object (or can help us

<sup>1</sup> See Note on page 88.

in our present need) which does not exhibit it as a thing born of, and nourished by, the fullest daylight of human intelligence.

If we regard current theological and philosophical literature as a whole, it may perhaps be said to be something like equally divided on this very vital issue. Open a new book in which the matter is touched upon, and the chances are about even of finding it stated that religion and philosophy are two names for the same thing, or that the true seat of religion is far away from all philosophy in the underground recesses of the soul. And to my mind the honours of the controversy have been about equally divided too. Rationalism seems to have been right in insisting that religion is grounded in intelligent insight, but wrong as to the sources of that insight. Romanticism seems to have been right in seeking a foundation for religion which should render it independent

of scientific and metaphysical speculation, but wrong in thinking to find such a foundation in some region of the mind that lies below the level of reflective thought.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES

A. *The meaning of "feeling" in Schleiermacher.* In the text I have assumed that when Schleiermacher says "feeling" he means to refer to the "affective" aspect of mental life which is distinguished by traditional psychology from cognition on the one hand and conation on the other. There is no doubt at all that this is Schleiermacher's professed or official meaning—what he *means* to mean, as one might say. In stating his view he refers explicitly to the traditional tripartite division, which he calls "perception, feeling and activity" (*Reden*, tr. Oman, p. 45). On the other hand, there is as little doubt that Schleiermacher, like so many other champions of romanticist theory, wins additional plausibility for his argument by taking advantage of the wide variety of looser associations which the word "feeling" is likely to call up in the ordinary reader's mind. James Ward distinguishes no less than five different things which "feeling" may be taken to mean: "(a) a touch, as feeling of roughness; (b)

an organic sensation, as feeling of hunger ; (c) an emotion, as feeling of anger ; (d) *any* purely subjective state, as feeling of certainty or of activity ; (e) the *one* subjective state that is purely 'affective,' as feeling of pleasure or pain." (*Psychological Principles*, p. 41). And he goes on to show how romanticist psychology has constantly tended to make capital out of this possibility of equivocation. In Schleiermacher's case it is plain enough that "feeling of absolute dependence" has a sub-meaning which makes it equivalent to the phrase "*Anschauung des Universums*," "intuition of the Universe"—a sort of perceptive awareness of the Infinite. This meaning comes up for criticism in the following section of the chapter.

B. *Mystical Piety and the Mystical Theory of Religion.* What I conceive myself to have criticised here and there in these lectures is not the type of piety which is often known as "mysticism," still less what is sometimes called the "mystical element" in all religion, but much rather what might be called the *mystical theory of religion*. The Germans sometimes avoid ambiguity by making a distinction between *Mystik* and *Mystizismus*, the former denoting that well-marked current in our Western religious history represented by such names as the Mohammedan Sufis, Pseudo-Dionysius, Behmen, Santa Teresa, Swedenborg ; the latter denoting that brand of the philosophy of religion which makes everything in religion turn on the immediate and esoteric character of the mystic vision. It is the latter alone

that I have made bold to criticise. Of the former I need only say that, while I do not believe it to represent the main stream of normal religious development, I do believe it to have again and again performed important service as a counter-current to the prevailing rationalism. I have made some acknowledgment of this service in the fifth chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### WHAT RELIGION REALLY IS

#### I

THE argument of the last chapter was that religion is, at heart, neither a matter of metaphysical speculation on the one hand nor a matter of ecstatic emotion and esoteric mystical experience on the other; and that therefore neither the rationalistic nor the romanticist interpretation of religion can be regarded as furnishing us with a satisfactory solution of our problem.

I wish now, however, to call your attention to the fact that the romanticist view of religion is not the only alternative to rationalism which has been canvassed within the last hundred and fifty years.

Many have indeed seemed to think that religion could save itself from the too embarrassing attentions of the metaphysicians only by withdrawing itself into the mysterious underground depths of our mental life and keeping company with none but the mystics. But there have always been others, less vociferous but, as I think, more numerous and representative, who had a different view to suggest. It is a view which can be put very simply, and is nothing else than this: that religion is, in the inmost heart of it, an affair neither of cosmological hypotheses nor of unfamiliar psychical experiences, but rather an affair of conduct, of how one lives one's daily life and faces one's daily task and trial. The essence of true piety, we are now told, is just to fill one's little niche with steadfast cheerfulness and courage, to seek to make real in our every word and deed the loftiest ideals that are revealed

to us and, in the soldier's phrase, to "do one's bit" towards the making of a better world.

Those of you who are students of history will doubtless recall more than one tentative expression of this view of things appearing, as it were, right in the middle of the predominant rationalism of the eighteenth century. One needs little learning, however, to be aware of its presence in the literature of the nineteenth century as a broadly-distributed tendency of thought. One classical expression of it is Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma*, first published in 1873. In that work, as in so much else that he wrote, Arnold takes his stand from the outset upon the purely practical nature of religion. "Surely," he exclaims,

"Surely if there be anything with which metaphysics have nothing to do, and where a plain man, without

skill to walk in the arduous paths of abstruse reasoning, may yet find himself at home, it is religion. For the object of religion is conduct ; and conduct is really, however man may overlay it with philosophical disquisitions, the simplest thing in the world. That is to say, it is the simplest thing in the world as far as *understanding* is concerned ; as regards *doing*, it is the hardest thing in the world.”

He goes on :

“ The antithesis between *ethical* and *religious* is thus quite a false one. Ethical means *practical* . . . Religious also means *practical*, but practical in a still higher degree ; and the right antithesis to both ethical and religious is the same as the right antithesis to practical : namely theoretical.”<sup>1</sup>

That is strongly put, but I should

<sup>1</sup> *Literature and Dogma*, Chapter I.

myself be inclined to say that this tendency to look upon religion as being essentially and in the first place a practical thing is the most characteristic contribution which the last two or three generations have made to religious thought. And I believe it is hardly possible to exaggerate the extent to which, in our own generation, educated men generally have fallen back upon the position that all the religion a man needs is the religion of doing one's duty, of being true to one's ideals, or—in the phrase that so often came to us from the Front—of "doing the right thing." What matters, we are told, is not what we believe but what we do; and Christianity is, or ought to be, a way of life rather than a way of thinking. Such phrases keep recurring like a refrain in our modern literature; and the words of John Stuart Blackie represent an ever-broadening sentiment :

“ Let prideful priests do battle about  
creeds :  
The Church is mine that does most  
Christlike deeds.”

## II

What then are we to say about this third kind of view of religion? Well, I must myself confess that, in comparison with the other views we have had before us, I am at once struck with the great good sense of it. I feel that at last we are looking in something like the right direction. I feel that religion is, to say the very least, *more* a matter of deeds and of loyalties than it is a matter of high-flying metaphysics on the one hand or of mystical ecstasy on the other. And there is one thing which in particular seems to me to be clear, namely, that in any case loyalty is all that is *required* of

us. It is not demanded of us that we should see visions or experience rapturous emotions. Such things may be given to us, but they are not asked of us. Nor can the acceptance of doctrine be directly demanded of us. There may, in some sense, be a "will" to believe, but there never can be a "shall" to believe. What is demanded of us is only that we fill our appointed place, that we "do our bit," that we be true to our highest insights of duty and service. And, after all, what else in life matters as compared with that?

This emphasis on the centrality of the practical or ethical element in religion is receiving more and more confirmation every day from the study of historic religion. On every hand we are being told that the end which religion has always had in view has been conduct rather than knowledge, and that such knowledge as it did seek after was primarily intended for the

guidance of conduct. Take for an example M. Durkheim's massive researches into the earliest forms of religion known to us, as illustrated especially in the cults of the Central Australian tribes. The believer, he tells us, feels that

“ the real function of religion is not to make us think, not to enrich our knowledge, nor to add to the conceptions which we owe to science others of another origin, but rather it is to make us act, to aid us to live.” <sup>1</sup>

Or take the no less elaborate studies that have recently been made of the more developed religions of Greece and Rome, and you will find one thing being very strongly emphasised about them—that what they demanded of men was not conformity of doctrine but conformity of conduct and of life. We might at first be

<sup>1</sup> *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, English translation, p. 416.

inclined to think that, however true this may be of the Græco-Roman tradition, it can hardly be asserted of the Semitic. But listen to what the greatest of all our modern Semitic scholars, Robertson Smith, wrote as early as 1889:

“What is requisite to religion is a practical acquaintance with the rules on which the deity acts and on which He expects His worshippers to frame their conduct. . . . This is true even of the religion of Israel. When the prophets speak of the knowledge of God, they always mean a practical knowledge of the laws and principles of His government in Israel, and a summary expression for religion as a whole is the ‘knowledge and fear of Jehovah,’ i.e. the knowledge of what Jehovah prescribes, combined with a reverent obedience.”<sup>1</sup>

If we pass to the religion of Jesus and

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of the Semites*, p. 23.

Paul, we shall, I think, find a more insistent emphasis than ever laid upon well-doing. The more closely we read the Gospels, the more do we seem to become aware that the religion of Jesus, if indeed (as I shall presently find it necessary to insist) it cannot be said entirely to consist in the doing of one's duty and the fulfilment of one's appointed task, yet at least always revolves round these things. "My meat," He said, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me." Or again,

"You will know them by their fruit . . . Every good tree bears sound fruit, but a rotten tree bears bad fruit; a good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a rotten tree cannot bear sound fruit. So you will know them by their fruit . . . It is not every one who says to me 'Lord, Lord!' who will get into the Realm of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in Heaven. Many will

say to me at that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not perform miracles in your name?' Then I will declare to them: I never knew you; depart from my presence, you workers of iniquity."<sup>1</sup>

Miracles and prophecy, the lore of demons and the ascription of honorific titles—these things had often been taken to lie right at the centre of religion. But to Jesus the centre of religion lies far elsewhere. It lies in doing God's will. The Kingdom of Heaven is not for those who are willing to call Jesus by a name of honour, but for those who do the will of His Father. If we judge by the existing records, there is hardly another sentiment which was as often upon His lips as this one. "Why call ye me 'Lord, Lord'?", He said on one occasion, "and do not the things which I say?"<sup>2</sup> And again:

<sup>1</sup> *Matthew*, vii, 16-23. Moffatt's translation.

<sup>2</sup> *Luke*, vi, 46.

“While He was saying this, a woman shouted to him out of the crowd, ‘Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts you sucked!’ But he said, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear and who observe the word of God!’<sup>1</sup>

Another favourite word of His (at least according to one of the Synoptic traditions) was “righteousness,” and His consistent teaching was that righteousness was the one thing that mattered. Blessed, He said, are those who hunger and thirst after it. And it was characteristic of Him to pick out from the sacred literature of His people a saying that would seem to make conduct supreme in religion. “Go ye and learn what this saying means: I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” What Jesus here teaches is, in Dr. Moffatt’s words, that “forgiveness and charity must

<sup>1</sup> *Luke*, xi, 27-28. Moffatt’s translation.

not be allowed to stand aside on any pretext—not even on the pretext that worship has prior obligations.”<sup>1</sup>

What is here true of Jesus is no less true of Paul. His religion may be a many-sided thing, but there is never any question where its main weight lies. It too lies, not in right thinking, but in right doing. It too lies, not in miracles and prophecy and demonology, nor in mystery and ecstasy, but in the loving heart and the helping hand. Here is the centre of Paul’s Gospel :

“ Set your hearts on the higher talents. And yet I show unto you a still higher path. I may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but if I have no love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. I may prophesy, fathom all mysteries and secret lore, I may have such absolute faith that I can move hills from their

<sup>1</sup> *The Theology of the Gospels*, p. 105.

place, but if I have no love, I count for nothing.”<sup>1</sup>

He concludes the passage—the most famous he ever wrote—by boldly setting love above faith and hope. “Faith and hope and love last on, these three, but the greatest of all is love.” All through the New Testament the same teaching will be found. Hear this from the *First Epistle to Timothy*:

“Warn certain individuals against teaching novelties and studying myths and interminable genealogies; such studies bear upon speculations rather than on the divine order which belongs to faith. Whereas the aim of the Christian discipline is the love that springs from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from an unhypocritical faith.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *I Corinthians*, xii, 31–xiii, 2. Moffatt’s translation.

<sup>2</sup> *I Timothy*, i, 3–5. Moffatt’s translation, except for the word *unhypocritical*. The Greek is *ἀνυποκρίτος*. Moffatt gives *sincere*.

## III

It seems to me quite clear, then, that in thus linking up religion with goodness and duty, with our ideals and our loyalties, we are for the first time hitting the trail that leads to a satisfactory solution of our problem. But are we now to say simply, with the writers whom I began by quoting, that religion is just the doing of one's duty and nothing more? Is religion, when stripped of all its accidental accompaniments and unnecessary adornments, merely another name for morality? To do each moment the duty that lies nearest one, to obey the leadings of conscience, to serve one's day and generation with a loyalty that asks no questions, to follow the gleam of the ideal—is that all that is meant by being religious?

You will all agree with me that it is not. Religion, you will all feel, though it includes noble living, is nevertheless something

more than noble living. Indeed you will probably wish to have me say that noble living, taken by itself, is not religion at all, but only what, in contradistinction to religion, we call morality. I am a little shy about making the distinction quite so sharp as this. I prefer to think of religion as including all that we mean by morality, just as I am sure that the Gospel of Jesus includes all that we mean by noble living. It includes it, and puts it right at its centre ; but it includes something more too.

What is this something more ? Perhaps we may get a first hint as to its nature by glancing at some of the more militant attempts which have been made to deny its existence and to confine religion strictly within the limits of a purely social and humanitarian outlook. The most celebrated of such attempts was that made early in the nineteenth century by Auguste Comte. According to this distinguished French

thinker the religion of the future must concern itself only with our human society on earth, and must never again venture to lift its gaze to the impenetrable Beyond. Piety, he says, has in itself nothing to do with the Beyond, or with any super-human reality. Humanity is its only worthy object of worship, its only God, its only *Grand Ètre*. He admits that the religion of the past has commonly failed to confine itself within such limits and has seemed to centre itself in the faith in a super-social Deity who made all things work together for the good of His human children; but he looks upon this "theological" tendency as marking only a passing stage which religion must eventually outgrow, and speaks of it as a mere "regency of God during the long minority of Humanity." In our own day this sociocratic theory of religion (as it has been called) has received not only a new

lease of life, but also considerable development, at the hands of certain French and American sociologists. The most distinguished name in this connection is that of Comte's countryman, M. Emile Durkheim, whom I have already mentioned as one of the greatest living students of primitive religion, and who first made bold to simplify the Comtian position by denying roundly that there ever was a super-human Regent in religion. It is precisely among the most primitive peoples, Durkheim claims, that the purely social nature of religion is most plainly evident. Religion has, at heart, never been anything more than the response produced in the mind of the individual by the thought of the social organism to which he belongs. Humanity's earliest god was the clan. As he puts it :

“ The god of the clan, the totemic principle, can be nothing else than the

clan itself, personified and represented to the imagination under the visible form of the animal or vegetable which serves as totem.”<sup>1</sup>

In America at the present moment this purely sociocratic reading of religion is being keenly canvassed by a considerable group of scholars, teachers, and even preachers. Chicago seems to be the headquarters of this movement, and the name of Dr. Edward Scribner Ames may perhaps be singled out as one of its most typical representatives. We can know nothing, they say, about the Unseen World that is beyond us, and it is wiser not to put any trust in its power or will to help us. Let us trust only Humanity, and let us worship only Humanity. Let us cling to our social values. Let us be loyal to Ideal Society and pay homage to it, as we pay homage

<sup>1</sup> *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, English translation, p. 206.

to our Flag or our Alma Mater, which are also ideal entities. I remember as a student in Germany hearing a not dissimilar view championed by the distinguished neo-Kantian philosopher, Paul Natorp. Natorp, like Comte, derived from Kant; but wished, just as Comte did, to leave one half of Kant's philosophy standing, while utterly demolishing the other. He has written a book entitled *Religion within the Limits of Humanity*, in which his teaching is—I quote his words—"religion, or that which has up to the present concealed itself under that name, is to be retained only, and strictly, in such measure as it confines itself within the limits of Humanity."<sup>1</sup>

Now to my thinking the very statement of a position of this sort, far from convincing us, tends rather, by reaction, to make us

<sup>1</sup> *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der Humanität*, 2 Aufl.,  
p. 49.

feel at once where it is that the true religious outlook carries us beyond such a purely social and humanistic attitude to life as is here recommended to us. Perhaps we may put it very simply as follows. Perhaps we may say that what religion stands for is not merely the performance of our duty and unswerving allegiance to our social standards, but also, and quite characteristically, the sense and the assurance that in doing our duty and in abiding by our standards *we somehow have the very Heart and Soul of things with us and are aligning ourselves with the Eternal.* It is just here, in this assurance, that we come upon that "something more" of which we are in search and which gives to religion its specific character. And we cannot but be aware at once of the immense and significant spiritual difference for which such an assurance must stand. To seek to realise the highest values which life has

disclosed to us, to be ever reaching out after the ever unrealised ideal—that is indeed a heroic outlook; but, taken by itself, it is not the highest outlook. To regard our best-prized virtues and our loftiest aims in life as mere original inventions on man's part, ideals which he has of his own original preference set before himself to attain and which merely hang, as it were, suspended in the airy unsubstantiality of his day-dreams until (and unless) they are realised in his own conduct—such a view may greatly ennable our living; but it falls short of the highest attitude to life. The highest outlook and attitude are those which take our values, not as inventions, but rather as revelations; as our best and most veridical clues to the nature of the System to which we belong; as representing not merely our purposes but the Universe's Purpose for us; as being not merely a meaning which we

import into our lives, but rather a meaning which we find in them. And it is this outlook and attitude which are the essence of religion. Its great and abiding superiority over any merely moral or social or humanistic outlook lies in the sense it gives us of being at home in the Universe. To the man in whose heart there is any germ or grain, even as a mustard-seed, of religious faith, the Universe is, at the heart of it, no bleak and foreign wilderness in which he, with his ideals of righteousness and love and faithfulness, is a forlorn and unheeded stranger. Still less is it an angry sea, ready to devour him and to swallow up for ever all that he holds dear. Rather does it seem to him as his father's house ; and he feels, as St. Paul long ago felt, that he is no longer a slave in it, but a son ; and if a son, then an heir.

Shall we now attempt a definition ? Shall we say that *religion is a consciousness*

*which comes to the dutiful, to the loyal, to those who are true to the highest values they know, that in being thus dutiful and loyal to their values, they are doing what they were meant and appointed to do, and are putting themselves in line with the Eternal and have His backing behind them?*

Such a definition, at all events, seems to me to correspond exactly with the teaching and with the temper of Jesus Christ. We saw how Jesus always put the doing of one's duty, the performance of one's task in life, and the hunger for perfect righteousness, at the very heart of His message ; and at first we might be misled into thinking that, in so doing, He was reducing religion to that very modern thing, " mere morality." There seems little doubt that His fondness for an Old Testament saying like " I will have mercy, and not sacrifice " was misunderstood in this way by some of His clerical contemporaries. But let us

read His words again, and more carefully. Then we shall see that duty in His mind is always a divinely-sanctioned duty, that the task of life is to Him always a task appointed, and that the righteousness of which He speaks is no mere man-made code but is God's righteousness. His meat, He said, was to do the will of *Him that sent Him*. And what is there in life that is more blessed and precious than this consciousness, which Jesus had so strongly, of being *sent*; and of being sent, not merely in the abstract, but sent to do this bit of work that lies before us? Or again, instead of speaking merely of the service of society, He lifts the matter up to an altogether higher plane and says: "He who does the will of my Father in Heaven." When He speaks of righteousness, what He says is: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." And everywhere the note of His teaching and of His

life, is this one note. Never was any view of life further from what we are wont to call mere morality than was that of Jesus. Righteousness and love and meekness, the discipline of self and the service of others—these were to Him no mere social inventions or conventions; they were laws of the Eternal Realm. As one of the greatest of His followers soon afterwards put it, “The Kingdom of God *is . . .* righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

You remember how I quoted Matthew Arnold as seeming almost, in some things that he said, to reduce religion to mere morality or good conduct without remainder. Arnold, however, was too great a man to rest content with such a conclusion, and so we find him seeking at once to put his finger on some respect in which religion carries us beyond the merely moral outlook. His first attempt, though it has gained

<sup>1</sup> *Romans*, xiv, 17.

considerable notoriety, is not a very happy one. "The true meaning of religion," he says, "is not merely morality, but *morality touched by emotion*." We shall all feel, I think, that morality touched by emotion is still only morality, and that, if quite untouched by emotion, it would be as little morality as it would be religion. Arnold's next suggestion, however, is of a very different order and points, as we cannot but feel, altogether in the right direction. What characterises religion, he now tells us, is its belief, not merely in the rightness of righteousness, but in "a power not *ourselves*, that makes for righteousness." "That root and ground of religion," he writes, "that element of awe and gratitude which fills religion with emotion and makes it other and greater than morality—the *not ourselves*."<sup>1</sup> It is true that on Arnold's lips the phrase has always

<sup>1</sup> *Literature and Dogma*, Chapter VIII, 1.

something of a meagre, and even perhaps of a Comtian, sound about it ; for Comte too was well aware that everything in religion turned upon the reality of some “ Power without us ” on which we could lean, though unfortunately he cheated himself with the belief that he could find such a Power within the circle of our merely human life. If, however, we put aside all such meaner undertones, and take Arnold’s words in their most generous meaning, then indeed we may accept his phrase as leading us to the true heart of the matter. It may even remind us of another and greater and older phrase—a little sentence rather—, which St. Paul long ago addressed to the newly-founded Church at Corinth, and which has often seemed to me to have well-nigh the whole meaning of religion contained in itself alone. “ Ye are not your own,” he said to them. Whose then were they, if they were not

their own ? The answer is that they were the Eternal's, that they belonged to the Power that made and moves the worlds. And which of us, who has ever taken his life in earnest, does not know what it means to feel that our lives are not ours to do with as we please, and that in a deep sense we are not our own property, but belong to Something or Someone infinitely greater and better and more significant than ourselves ? Of course it is plain to all, and is admitted even by the stoutest opponents of religious faith, like Mr. Bertrand Russell, that we belong to the Almighty System, in which we stand enmeshed, in the sense of being physically in its power. But what Mr. Russell denies is that this system exercises any moral claim upon us. We are just and honourable and kind, he says, not because these things are demanded of us, but because we demand them of ourselves. It is in defiance

of That from which we flow, not in obedience to it, that (as he sees it) we strive to live our lives aright. Well, faith rests upon the opposite insight—upon the insight that you and I are here, neither to shake our fists at the Eternal in defiance, nor to exploit it for our own petty purposes, but to serve it, or rather Him, in love.

The view of religion to which we have thus been led may now be summed up very briefly. Religion is, essentially, a product of our consciousness of value : it is an outlook on things which arises, characteristically, in the doing of one's duty—which grows up in the hearts of those who love whatsoever things are true and honest and just and pure and lovely and of good report and who, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things and do them. Yet religion is more than the consciousness of value and more

than the love of goodness. It has to do, rather, with the relation of value *to reality*, with what Socrates and Plato long ago called "the identity of goodness *and being*." Dean Inge has spoken of it as a "confidence in the reality of things hoped for and the hopefulness of things real."<sup>1</sup> My own master in philosophy, Professor Pringle-Pattison, has spoken of it as "the worship of the ideal conceived as the eternally real, or (to put the same thing from the other side) the worship of the real conceived as good."<sup>2</sup> All the religion that is in the world to-day has its ultimate root and ground in this one irresistible conviction which comes (for the moment we need not ask how) to upward-striving mortals, that in such values as those of love and honour and purity and living for others they are striking the rock-bottom of reality

<sup>1</sup> *Outspoken Essays*, First Series, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> See *Hibbert Journal*, October 1915.

and are lighting upon the real key to the meaning and purpose of life—of the Cosmic Order as a whole and of their place in it. Here, then, we come upon the true head-waters of world-religion. From this single, simple source flow all the cults and all the creeds, which are but so many different attempts to interpret the real order of things in terms of the highest values which experience reveals to us. Start from any point you choose in the vast and varied phenomenology of human religion, and dig down to its ultimate foundations in human experience, and what will you find but the soul's deep persuasion that it is reading the dark face of things most wisely and most truly when it reads it in terms of love and duty and the things that matter ? I take it to be one of the best established facts of universal history that in the hearts of those who love goodness there grows up a great sense of trust in an Eternal

Goodness. That fact, with what follows from it, is all we mean by religion.

## V

In the last chapter I gave you some historical references for the two great types of interpretation of religion which we were then discussing, and so it is fitting that I should also mention some names in connection with the view of religion which I am now commending to you. It was adumbrated long ago by Plato in his doctrine of the Good, but the implications of what Plato says about the identity of goodness and existence were never fully realised either in the ancient or in the mediæval world. And so this view of religion appears as a characteristically modern one, and is based on what is perhaps the most distinctive original insight which modern thought has contributed to

the problem of life as a whole. You can trace its scattered and unsystematic beginnings throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—in Pascal and Rousseau, and in a different way in Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Tractate* and in some of the so-called "Deistic" writings. But for its great original genius it had to wait for Immanuel Kant. It was Kant who first clearly set it forth that religion is essentially a product of our consciousness of value, having to do with the relation of value to reality. That is the fundamental insight round which Kant's whole philosophy is built, and it is a pleasure to notice how early it was fixed in his mind. In a little book called *Dreams of a Spirit-seer* and published as early as 1766 (fifteen years before the publication of the first of the famous *Critiques*), he writes as follows with reference to faith in a future life :

“ It seems more in accordance with human nature and with the purity of morals to base the expectation of a future world on the sentiments of a well-behaved soul, than contrariwise to base its good behaviour on the hope of another world. We are thus left with moral faith, the simplicity of which can be superior to many a subtlety of argumentation, and which is alone suited to men of every condition, inasmuch as it leads them in no roundabout way to their true ends.” <sup>1</sup>

In these words we already seem to hear a truer note struck than any that had for long been heard in the academic study of religion. How good it is to see the truth of religion grounded at last neither upon cosmological, teleological and ontological demonstrations on the one hand, nor upon esoteric mystic visions on the other, but

<sup>1</sup> See the closing paragraph of *Träume eines Geistersehers*.

upon "the sentiments of a well-behaved soul!"

To attempt to compress the essence of Kant's teaching into a few sentences is perhaps to be too bold; but I shall take my courage in my hands. Kant accepts fully the claims of natural—perhaps I should say of Newtonian—science to give us reliable and authoritative information concerning the phenomena with which it deals, but he is entirely sceptical as to the possibility of successfully extending the operations of science in such a way as make them yield any answers to our ultimate questionings concerning the nature and meaning of the Universe as a whole. Learned investigation, he believes, is never likely to shed any light at all on these high matters. Yet it is precisely about these high matters that some assured knowledge is practically most vital to us. Whether or not this chemical equation or that

law of electrodynamics is correct may be important enough to us in certain minor respects, but what the meaning of existence is and what our relation to "the scheme of things entire" is to be taken to be—these questions concern the very roots of all our being. Now it was Kant's belief that in the answering of these questions the scientist and metaphysician are at no greater advantage than the simplest and most unlettered of men. What counts here is not great learning but a pure and simple heart; not scientific cleverness but moral discernment. In the doing of our duty there comes to us, if not exactly the knowledge which science could not give us, yet a confident and trustful faith which, for all practical purposes, will serve in its stead. The duty-loving man finds himself believing that there is, at the bottom,—and the words are Kant's own—"a harmony

between nature and morality." That belief is what is known to the world as religion. "Religious faith," says Kant, is nothing but "trust in the promise of the moral law"—trust, that is to say, that conscience will prove no lying voice, and love and selfless service no blind guides to the ultimate meaning of the giant system of things in which we find ourselves involved.

This great discernment of Kant's<sup>1</sup> first received notable development and elaboration at the hands of a number of distinguished countrymen of his own—Fichte and Lotze and, above all, Albrecht Ritschl and his widely influential school of followers. Ritschl, like Kant, took his stand upon the determinative connection which he saw to exist between our religious faith and our consciousness of value. "Religious knowledge," he tells us, "consists in independent value-judgments,

<sup>1</sup> See Note on page 135.

inasmuch as it deals with the relation between the blessedness which is assured by God and sought by man, and the whole of the world which God has created and rules in harmony with His final end.”<sup>1</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, however, there was hardly any country in which a view of this kind was not represented by a number of illustrious names. In France, for example, there was Auguste Sabatier and his school of Symbolo-fideists, as they called themselves ; in Denmark there was Harald Höffding ; in Holland, Rauwenhoff ; in Switzerland, Gaston Frommel. Possibly no formulation has attained wider currency than that of Höffding who has defined religion as “ faith in the conservation of value.” More fully :

“ The religious problem proper begins where Comte’s religion ends, viz., at the question as to how the

<sup>1</sup> *Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, Vol. III, English translation, p. 207.

development of the world is related to that of the human race and to that of the human ideal."

"The relation between value and reality is the sphere in which religion finds its home, in distinction from other experiences which are concerned only with values or only with reality."

"The essence of all religion consists not in the solution of riddles, but in the conviction that value will be preserved."<sup>1</sup>

In England and America we have somewhat suffered from the fact that this general tendency of thought has been so largely represented among us by extremists of one kind or another. They have had extremists in other countries too—Vaihinger in Germany, Le Roy and the other philosophers of Roman Catholic modernism in France. But in our English-speaking world, when one speaks of faith

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy of Religion*, English translation, pp. 359, 243, 206.

having its source in our consciousness of value, it is of so very extreme and unbalanced a movement as pragmatism that people are apt to think. Yet even from the extremists there is something to be learned. Read William James' *Will to Believe*, Dr. Schiller's *Problems of Belief*, Lord Balfour's older *Foundations of Belief* and Father Tyrrell's *Essays on Faith and Immortality*, and, however blundering and even wrong-headed much of what you there find may seem to you, you can hardly, I think, escape the sense of being in the presence of some new thing which our age is gropingly trying to say about the foundations of our ultimate beliefs.

## VI

I shall conclude our study by returning for a few minutes to our idea of religion as being a confidence in the reality of

goodness and the goodness of reality, and trying to see how this confidence works out in the actual detail of belief. The most general result that flows from it is, as we have seen already, the sense that comes to the true-hearted and loyal of being at home in the Universe. They feel that That from Which they flow and in Whose hands their fate lies, is not indifferent to the things they have learned to love and value, but loves and values them too. They feel that in doing their duty they are doing what is wanted and expected of them, and putting themselves in line with something bigger and better than themselves. This is the beginning of what is meant by "Communion with God."

But besides thus giving us a more than human fellowship, the faith that our values are grounded in the real order of things gives us also a sense of more than human

security. It saves us, and all that we care about, not only from spiritual isolation, but also from transiency and decay. This is what Höffding means when he speaks of religion as faith in the *conservation* of value, and what Professor Hocking of Harvard means by saying that, essentially, "the religious quest is a rebellion against the *depotency* of values."<sup>1</sup> In the hearts of those who have steadfastly sought after the highest good there has ever grown up the firm assurance that the All-environing Power will not play them false by destroying in the end, both themselves and all they have toiled and striven to attain ; but will rather see to it that nothing that is worthy to survive shall ever be lost ; nay more, that, in Browning's words,

" All we have willed or hoped or dreamed  
of good shall exist ;  
Not its semblance, but itself ; no  
beauty, nor good, nor power

<sup>1</sup> See *The Journal of Religion*, November, 1923.

Whose voice has gone forth, but each  
survives for the melodist  
When eternity affirms the conception  
of an hour.”<sup>1</sup>

It is in this assurance that the great conception of Divine Providence takes its rise. It is here, too, that all the great eschatologies were born and, above all, the tremendous thought of human immortality.

I need not tell you that the one comprehensive conception in which all these thoughts and assurances are summed up is the conception of God. In every age and in every clime men of every race and of every tongue have felt that the good man could be at home in the Universe only if at the heart of it there be a living Spirit; and that it was only to a living Spirit that he could with any confidence entrust his values. Pity all noble seekers

<sup>1</sup> *Abt Vogler*, X.

and leal-hearted workers, pity the true and the tender and the brave ; pity them for lonely and miserable aliens existing only on sufferance in a heedless Universe ; pity truth and honour and heroism and chivalry and all things worthy of praise ; pity them for unsubstantial nothings destined soon to eternal oblivion—*unless God*. The sense of God's presence with us in the world, the sense of oneness with Him in the doing of our duty, the daily exploration of His loving designs for us, and the assurance of His eternal guardianship of the interests we hold most dear—that, finally, is what religion means.

One unanswered question will remain in your minds. You will wish to know *how* this conviction of the reality of Eternal Goodness arises in the minds of those who hunger and thirst after such goodness as they know. You will wish to know exactly whence they obtain so great and

blessed an assurance. Perhaps someone will even ask whether, after all, they must not go to scientific metaphysics for it. All I can do is to repeat that, on the contrary, I believe the most highly trained metaphysician to be no whit better off in respect of *this* knowledge and assurance than the humblest saint of God. For a more positive answer I must ask you to wait until the fifth and last of these chapters. Meanwhile, in the next chapter, I am anxious to raise with you the further question of the meaning, not now of religion as a whole, but of the Christian religion in particular.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

*Kant and Schleiermacher.* It so happens that in these lectures I had occasion to speak of Kant only in terms of praise and of Schleiermacher only in terms of criticism. This, however, was largely accidental and certainly does not mean that I am

insensible either to Kant's many defects or to Schleiermacher's great positive contributions. I should, indeed, say that, on the whole, modern theology has at least as much to learn from Schleiermacher as it has from Kant. Kant's understanding of religion, however admirable in principle, is notoriously defective in its working out, and a book like *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (which, however, is far from representing Kant at his best) compares as poorly as could be with the warmth and richness of the great *Glaubenslehre*. What the Ritschlians did was in large measure to combine the insights of Kant and Schleiermacher, while avoiding the outstanding defects of each. From Schleiermacher they got their initial impulse, their method, and their determination that religion be always allowed to speak for itself; from Kant they got their conviction that it is out of our consciousness of *value* (rather than out of any immediate "sense and taste" of God) that religion arises. But into all this I could not go in the course of a single lecture.

## CHAPTER IV

### WHAT CHRISTIANITY IS

#### I

WE are now in possession of a fairly clear view as to the essential nature of religion, and it is a view which I think does something to clear up the problems which were raised in our minds in the first of these chapters. But there is one major problem that still remains to be faced, namely, the problem suggested by the great variety of religious creeds and of religious systems that there are in the world. It is easy to imagine some objector saying to us at this point, "I can understand religion, but I can't make head or tail of the religions, nor have I any idea how I am to choose between them."

And we can imagine another putting it thus: "I know now what the word religion stands for, but I am still quite in the dark as to what Christianity stands for, unless indeed it be no more than another name for the same thing." To the problem here suggested I propose to devote the present chapter.

Now there is no doubt that there is a way of conceiving the nature of a particular religion and the relation of the various particular religions to one another which renders this problem quite insoluble. A few generations ago it was very commonly supposed that the different religions stood for fundamentally different answers to the riddle of existence and that they were entitled to the common name of religion only because they were all answers, of one kind or another, to that riddle. Of these very multifarious answers, of course only one could be true, and all the others were

regarded as utterly misleading and false. So each man believed the religion of his own people, or of his own tradition, to be the true religion, and all other religions to be utterly vain and foolish, and even wicked, and to do their devotees no good at all but, on the contrary, a great deal of harm. During the nineteenth century, however, this view, which had long been questioned by the far-seeing few, came at last to be quite generally discredited. It is the true soul of the nineteenth century which speaks in Matthew Arnold when he cries :

“ Children of Men ! the unseen Power,  
whose eye  
For ever doth accompany mankind,  
Hath looked on no religion scornfully  
That men did ever find.

Which has not taught weak wills how  
much they can ?  
Which has not fall’n on the dry heart  
like rain ?

Which has not cried to sunk self-weary man :

*Thou must be born again ?*"

What we now understand is that the various religious systems of the world, far from representing so many utterly various and conflicting guesses, all stand at bottom for the same fundamental view as to the meaning of life. Several lines of research and of reflection have united in leading us to this important insight. In the first place it is becoming clearer every day that the religions of the uncivilised races in every quarter of the globe, and at every period of which we have any record, bear a quite remarkable resemblance to one another. Indeed we are now in a position to say that the primitive religions are, at bottom, but one religion. "Religion in the lower culture," says Professor Estlin Carpenter, "takes many forms but, speaking broadly, they rest upon a common interpre-

tation of the World.”<sup>1</sup> Since it is out of this primitive root that all our so-called religions have grown, it thus becomes difficult to think that these are properly to be regarded as mutually exclusive systems. And, as a matter of fact, the closer and more sympathetic study and the better-equipped historical investigation that have recently been devoted to the more important of the advanced religious systems of the world, have been leading us in no small part to an identical conclusion. The old lines that used to divide the different religions so sharply from one another have in almost every case become blurred and uncertain. It is now impossible to mention any religion that is regarded by the historians as a unit clearly separable from the rest of world-religion. Every known religion is a complex phenomenon, a synthesis of previous historical entities, and the elements

<sup>1</sup> *Comparative Religion*, p. 101.

that go to make it up have, many of them, entered also into those partially different combinations which we call the other religions. The plain truth is, therefore, that in any strict sense of the term, the world never has seen a new religion. This is well put by Father Tyrrell in his *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, a book that contains not a little sound instruction among much that is extreme and lacking in balance. "There have been and may yet be new religious institutions," he says, "but there has not been and never can be a new religion, any more than a new language. Each is a bifurcation of some branch that is itself a bifurcation; and all can trace their origin to a common stem that has grown out of a root-idea—the idea of religion."<sup>1</sup> Have we not all of us at one time or another had the experience of discovering behind the apparently com-

<sup>1</sup> *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, p. 252.

plete mutual exclusiveness of two different religious institutions a marvellously identical faith ? As you will soon see when I come to speak of them, I have no desire whatever to minimise the differences between the various religious systems, but at present I shall go so far as to say this : that the element of identity in world-religion is, on the whole, at least as important as are the elements of diversity.

Of Christianity the same thing is here true as is true of all other systems. New Testament scholars are, I think, agreed that Jesus never thought of Himself as founding anything that could be called a new religion ; just as Indian scholars tell us that Buddha never intended to found a new religion, but only a new monastic order. Jesus was, from first to last, loyal to all the fundamental religious traditions of His people, and there is no sign of His ever having intended to brush these aside

and put something else in their place. The differences between the piety of the Old Testament and that of the New—between the Hebrew and the Christian faiths—are in many respects, as I shall soon be insisting, of a very deep-going kind, but they are not such as really to justify our thinking of the two faiths, quite bluntly, as different religions. In reality there are no such things as different religions—any more than there are different moralities. There are different varieties of religion and different stages in the progress of religion, and there are differing religious traditions, and there are all sorts and conditions of religious institutions ; but in a grand and ultimate sense there is only one religion—the religion which finds its first crude and vague expression on the lips of the savage ; the religion which gradually, though blunderingly and stumblingly, rises to certain lower summits

of its noble ascent in Veda and Zend-Avesta, in Greek tragedian and Hebrew law-giver and prophet ; the religion which at last finds its full and only complete consummation in the soul of Jesus Christ. As Dean Inge has said, “ The Gospel of Christ is not *a* religion, but religion itself, in its universal and deepest significance.”<sup>1</sup>

Now it seems to me that this conclusion is one that is of very real practical help to us in our religious thinking. It is a help to be able to feel that in deciding for Christ and Christianity we are not merely, and perhaps for largely accidental and traditional reasons, giving our adherence to one among a thousand alternative panaceas that have been suggested for our human ills. Christianity, I am glad to think, is not a special brand of religion, as it were ; it is just religion itself, religion at its best and at its widest, faith in God

<sup>1</sup> *Outspoken Essays*, First Series, p. 229.

at its surest and clearest. It is true that the attempt has often been made within the Christian Church to give to Christianity an esoteric and exclusivist turn—to convert it into a secret cult or a new and unique philosophy, to identify it with a specific mystical experience or one (albeit the best) of many possible avenues to God. But the best solvent for all such misunderstandings of it is a re-reading of the Gospel story. There were many secret cults and sects and many rival mystery-religions competing for men's devotion in the age when Christianity was born. Galilee must have listened, on the one hand, to many a strange prophet retailing some patent recipe for the soul's salvation and, on the other hand, to many a narrow-minded and traditional-bound ecclesiastic demanding an exclusive allegiance to the religious institutions of his own land. But in listening to Jesus men were listening to

something different, to something strangely new ; they were listening to one who emphasised neither traditional institutions on the one hand nor any *dernier cri* in religion on the other, but only and always the heart's native faith. Jesus had eyes to find this faith in the queerest places and in the queerest people—in people whom the pious clerics of the day would not pass on the street without shutting their eyes, lest the sight should pollute their holiness ; and yet He found it lacking in the very quarters where churchly tradition might seem to be strongest. Yes, the faith which Jesus required of men was neither credal adherence nor mystic ecstasy so much as the faith that is in some sort native to every pure and gentle heart—the faith in man, the faith in life, the faith in the power of love, the faith in the Unseen Love of God. *If you only had more faith ! If you only had more love !*—is not that the central

burden of the message of Christ? For myself, and quite apart from what this and that expert critic may say, I can never read the Synoptic Gospels through without feeling how pronounced, how refreshingly pronounced, is this vein of broad-mindedness, of lay good sense, of anti-clericalism, of anti-exclusivism and anti-particularism in the temper and teaching of our Lord. There is something about all He says—about the way of life He proposes and about the thought of God He inculcates—that makes us feel at once that it can be foreign to no human heart. The greatest thing about Christianity is not really its novelty so much as its universality, not its uniqueness so much as its inclusiveness. Its Founder was indeed at no small pains to make it clear that His teaching was for the most part in line with the best teaching of the past of His people. Christianity does not exclude the deep and

real messages of the other religions, but much rather includes them ; and this is a truth which was first effectively rediscovered, not in any high-and-dry academic quarter, but (as long ago by St. Paul at Athens) in the actual experience of the mission-field. I am glad that Christianity does not end in “—ism.” It is not an “—ism.” It is neither a special theory nor a special brand of piety so much as it is the religion of all who strive to love God with all their heart and soul and strength and mind, and their neighbours as themselves.

## II

And now that that has been said, let us look at the other side of the matter, at the very plain and obvious element of diversity that there is in world-religion. The diversity is, of course, greatest when we are com-

paring the religion of some very primitive people with that of some civilised race. If, for instance, we place the religion of Jesus and St. Paul side by side with that of the Central Australian aborigines or of an American Indian tribe, it will require not only much sympathetic psychological insight but also a certain considerable equipment of anthropological and historical knowledge in order to see any resemblance between the two at all. Indeed, in bringing together two such extremes as these are, it is not really for resemblance that we should look—any more than we should expect to find a resemblance between the acorn and the oak—but rather for some evolutionary relationship. Clearly the most striking diversities between the religious ideas and practices of different races are just as in the parallel case of morality, due to the fact of progress. But not all diversities can be so understood, for there

is also notable diversity in the religions of races which stand upon what is roughly the same cultural level, as, for example, the religion of the ancient Hebrews and that of the ancient Greeks or the higher forms of Indian religion. Can we, then, find something like a general law which will cover both kinds of diversity? I think we can. I think we may say that the development and the variety of world-religion are to be mainly explained by the fact that *men's religious ideas keep pace with their ideas of moral value*. From a very early stage in religion's growth the all-determinative religious idea is the idea of God, and men's ideas of God are always faithful mirrors of the things they value most. As Goethe said long ago,

“ Im innern ist ein Universum auch,  
Daher der Völker löblicher Gebrauch,  
Dass jeglicher das Beste, was er kennt,  
Er Gott, ja seinen Gott benennt,

Ihm Himmel und Erden übergiebt,  
Ihn fürchtet und womöglich liebt."

"Within us, as well as without us, there is a Universe; and thence arises the praiseworthy custom of all peoples that each should call the best he knows by the name of God, *his* God; and give over heaven and earth to Him; and fear Him and, when possible, love Him." It is this same truth which Höffding puts in the exact language of science, when he says that "*every religious standpoint gathers up into its conception of God the highest known values.*"<sup>1</sup> There is only one qualification which I think the facts of religious history compel us to make to this statement, and that is that there often seems to be a considerable interval of time between the discovery of a new value in the ethical and social sphere and its application to religion. The appearance of a discrepancy between

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy of Religion*, English translation, p. 61.

the standards operative in the best mind of the people as a whole and the standards reflected in their thought of God is a not unfamiliar historical phenomenon ; and so, instead of saying that men's ideas of God "keep pace" with their developing ethical insights, we should perhaps say, "follow a pace or two behind." The main point to be grasped, however, is simply that it is in the light of men's practical values and ideals that the criticism of the idea of God, in which religious advance so largely consists, is always carried on ; and that a new and forward step in religion always means *the discovery of a new value in the sphere of social conduct and its (perhaps somewhat tardy) application to religion and the thought of God.*

### III

In the light of these preliminary con-

siderations we may now raise the question, What is it in Christianity that is really distinctive and that gives us a right to believe that it alone can fully satisfy our human need? What has it to add to the religious life of mankind as a whole? Perhaps you will feel like answering that a good part of what it does is not to add but to subtract something. And indeed it is true that no small part of the message of Jesus is a message of deliverance from the too elaborate paraphernalia of the old religions. It has been well said that part of the trouble with the religion of Jesus' Jewish contemporaries is not that you will not find in their writings teaching that is very like the teaching of Jesus, but that you will find a great deal else too. Read through the books of the "Mosaic" Law, read some of the Rabbinic literature dating from about the time of Christianity's birth, read also what is left of the sacred

oracular and liturgical books of the Romans ; and then read the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' answers to the question " What must I do to be saved ? " and Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians ; and you cannot, I think, but be struck by the simplicity and directness of the Christian religion, as it was first preached. " My yoke," said Jesus, " is easy, and my burden is light." Yet this simplicity which attaches to the teaching of Jesus is no mere negative quality, but on the contrary springs from a positive insight and is closely connected with that greatly increased *inwardness* which historians have so often remarked to be a leading characteristic both of the Christian ethic and of the Christian faith. The demands of Jesus are simple because they are inward. " The tendency to develop and make prominent a scheme of external duties," we read in Sidgwick's *History of Ethics*, " has always

been balanced and counteracted in Christianity by the ineffaceable remembrance of the founder's opposition to Jewish legalism. . . . It has never been forgotten that 'inwardness,' rightness of heart or spirit, is the special and pre-eminent characteristic of Christian goodness.'<sup>5</sup> We may say, then, with assurance, that Christianity stands out from world-religion as a whole in respect both of its greater simplicity and its greater inwardness. The religion of Jesus is the religion of the heart in its simplest and most straightforward expression.

But can we go further? Can we say that Christianity stands for some definitely new light upon life and upon God—some light which men can get nowhere else? I think we can, and I shall do my best to say what I believe the new light to be.

Our general reflections upon the nature

<sup>5</sup> *History of Ethics*, pp. 113-114.

of religious progress will perhaps have led us to expect the emergence in Christianity of some new ethical insight together with its new application to the thought of God and the Unseen World. And that is exactly what we do seem to find. The new ethical insight we can perhaps best express in a famous saying of St. Paul's :

Μείζων δὲ τούτων ἡ ἀγάπη.

“The greatest thing of all is love.”

If we place ourselves before the phenomenon of historic Christianity as a whole and, regarding it broadly, ask ourselves where the characteristic genius of it is to be taken to lie, we shall inevitably be led back to that new spirit which was in the early Christian community and to express which the early believers had to bring into currency what was all but a new word ; the word *agapē*, which we can only translate as Christian love. I think even the

outsider knows that the Christian way of life, whenever it has been true to itself, has been the way of love. Historical critics have, indeed, often enough puzzled their heads about the essence of Christianity and have not infrequently lured their readers into a like uncertainty ; and yet I believe that in his heart the ordinary man knows well enough what is meant by a Christian life. It is true that (as we saw in the first of these chapters) the knowledge is far from being always ready to his use, and that, if you ask him point-blank, he will as like as not give you a wrong answer or no answer at all ; but if you take the better way of studying his common usage of the word “Christian” in ordinary conversation, you may find that he is really wiser in this matter than many a learned writer. The phrases “You’re a Christian” or “That’s Christian of him” were good army slang during the war

years in France, and, however far they fell short of their ideal meaning, they were nevertheless usually employed in such a way as to make it clear that the world as a whole has not wholly failed to grasp the meaning of the Christian message.

But how did the new spirit arise? Whence came this *agapē*? Where did Paul learn that “the greatest thing of all is love”? There is, of course, but one answer. The new insight goes back, in the most direct way possible, to what Paul calls “the mind which was in Christ Jesus.” What makes Jesus stand out from the page of history is just this; that more than anybody before Him and also, it is to be feared, more than anybody since His time, *He believed in love*. And every time that either Paul or John pronounces the word *agapē*, the remembrance of the life and death of Jesus is vividly in their minds.

Let us, then, see what it is that Jesus has to say to us about love ; and let us, following the New Testament example, remember that He says it with His deeds and with His life's blood as well as with His lips. No reader of the Gospels can long remain in doubt that Jesus has something quite special and particular to teach us about the management of our relations with one another. It should be clear also that what He does is not to provide us with a detailed moral code or even to throw out a large number of valuable hints so much as to whisper a single and simple secret in our ears. And this is what He whispers : *Have you tried the way of love ?* Love, He believed, was the solvent of all our difficulties, all our problems of conduct, all that mars our intercourse with one another. Love, He believed, was the way to tackle every situation, to win every kind of man. We all, of course, love somebody ;

we all love our kinsfolk; we all love people who love us and are kind to us; we all love people who are good and charming. Even the heathen, as Jesus was so fond of pointing out, do that. But what we are now asked to do is to love our enemies, to love those who hate us, to love the stranger at our gates, to love the poor, to love the sick, to love prisoners, to love the down-trodden and all who are as lost sheep in our midst, to love our prodigal sons, to love the outcasts, to love the sinners. Especially Jesus seems to have been anxious to suggest the way of love as an alternative for anything like an appeal to justice. The saying "Judge not" carries us very deep into His philosophy of life. "The motive of justice," says Professor E. F. Scott in his book on *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, "undoubtedly tends to fall into the background," the law of love taking its place;

and, as the same writer adds, "There can be no question that in the final issue the position of Jesus is unanswerable. Indiscriminate kindness may be blamed for many evils, but infinitely more harm has been wrought by man's blundering efforts to do justice."<sup>1</sup> The Mosaic law had set up an equitable standard of compensatory justice in order to curb the natural instinct for unlimited vengeance which had found expression in the bitter vendettas of the Semitic tribesmen. "No more than an eye for an eye, no more than a tooth for a tooth," it had decreed, thereby inaugurating a great advance in moral standards. Yet at no point does Jesus set Himself in more outspoken opposition to the old order than just here. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth : but I say unto you that ye resist not evil,

<sup>1</sup> *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus* (American Edition), pp. 85-86.

but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also . . . Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies . . .” If only we knew the joy which love brings, if only we knew the power which is in it to melt the hardest heart and to win the coldest heart, then, says Jesus, we would put aside all that loveless, frigid, hate-begetting machinery of distributive and retributive justice—recrimination, revenge, compensation, standing upon one’s rights, satisfaction for outraged dignity, the appeal to the law-courts, and all their sorry like. Put your trust in love, He says to us ; trust it utterly ; trust it to the very end ; put all your weight on it ; for it will not fail you—love never fails. That this was the plain teaching of Jesus has been recognised even by those critics who have felt themselves

unable to accept it. Professor Kirsopp Lake, for instance, says :

“ . . . Experience (which has, after all, some merit) seems to prove that the policy of not resisting evil leads to its triumph rather than its defeat. But this fact gives no justification for explaining away or watering down the plain and intelligible teaching of Jesus. It was his teaching.” <sup>1</sup>

I do not wish to comment on Professor Lake’s disagreement with Jesus, but there will be many of us who cannot forbear a wry smile at being told that in this respect “ the War has brought out the human limitations of the ethics of Jesus by the intellectual horizon of His own time.” <sup>2</sup> The War! And yet did not Mr. Bernard Shaw tell us that the only man who came out of

<sup>1</sup> *Landmarks in the History of Early Christianity* (American Edition), pp. 25-26.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

that same War with any intellectual credit was Jesus Christ ?

But what is this love which Christianity makes to be the secret of right living and would have us display towards all those with whom we have to do ? Well, there is nothing about it that really needs explaining, for it is a very familiar part of the instinctive nature of us all. It is rooted in what modern psychologists call the parental sentiment—the sentiment which is at the basis of family life, the sentiment which we exercise primarily towards our children but also, with only slight modification, towards all our near relatives and towards the friend of our bosom. Now it was the conviction of Jesus, and it is a great part of the distinctive message of Christianity, that the highest of our human values are the values found and developed in the life of the family, and that if only, in our dealings with all those with whom

we have to do, we displayed one half of the patience and the tenderness and the sympathy and the understanding and the forgiveness which we display to our brothers and our sons, the world would be a far better and happier place. Every reader of the Gospels must realise how dear to the heart of Jesus family life was. It was in certain deeds He had seen done and certain words He had seen spoken within the family circle that the life of those little Eastern towns in which His days were spent seemed to strike its highest value—in a mother's tenderness and selfless devotion to the child of her womb, in the large-hearted generosity of brother towards brother, in a much-tried father's free forgiveness of his erring son. Thus was His great secret suggested to Him. If only we could extend these family values ! If only we could all live as brothers ! If only we could deal with our enemies as we deal

with our friends ! If only we could feel towards the lost sheep of our human society as a Galilean shepherd feels towards his sheep when they go astray, or, better still, as the best kind of Galilean father feels when his profligate and wandering son returns to him at last !

But in what sense, and to what extent, can this teaching be said to have been new ? Of recent years there has been much discussion of this question, and some of it has not been very profitable. It must of course be granted at once that there is nothing either in the temper or in the teaching of Jesus that is a sheer novelty, an utterly new beginning unrelated to all that goes before. You will not find that anywhere in history or anywhere in human experience. *Ex nihilo nihil.* It seems certain that not a few of the doubts that have recently been cast upon the originality of what our Lord has to say to us are due

to the fact that the critics who give expression to them are working with a largely false and chimerical idea of what it is that constitutes true historical originality. I feel also that it is doing something less than justice to the facts to find the originality and greatness of Jesus to lie merely in a number of scattered convictions. In their recent scholarly work on *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Professors Foakes-Jackson and Lake write :

“ In what way did the teaching of Jesus differ from that of his contemporaries ? . . . The differences which are important concern three subjects of vital and controversial interest—resistance to the oppressors of Israel, the fate of the People of the Land, and the right observance of the Law.”<sup>1</sup>

From one point of view, however, I cannot help finding something almost naïve in

<sup>1</sup> *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Vol. I, pp. 288–289.

such a catalogue, for there seems to be in it no proper realisation of the fact that behind all three items of it (and surely also behind not a few other teachings that fell only less strangely on the ears of the Scribes and Pharisees) there is a single principle, a single spirit, a single new insight. What was really new about Jesus' outlook on life was not three things, but only one ; namely, that in it, as never before in human history, the law of loving-kindness was realised in its full meaning and made to cover every relationship of life.

In the mind of Jesus Himself, indeed, there seems to have been perfect clarity on this whole issue. Jesus knew that love was not a new thing in the world but was, on the contrary, a thing rooted very deeply in the instinctive natures of us all. He knew that the Old Testament was full of injunctions to love, and He took special pleasure in being able to quote from the Old

Testament in support of all but His most characteristic teachings about love. It was in *Leviticus* that He found that saying which He has made so intimately His own, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” And yet He knew well that in His teaching as a whole there was contained a new wine which would in the end burst the old bottles of the Jewish code. He knew that nobody had ever taken the law of love so much in earnest, or had realised the full extent of its tremendous implications, or had made it the one law of life, as He was now doing. And so, though none ever made less of a fetish of originality, yet at the crucial point He did not hesitate to proclaim the real uniqueness of His outlook: “Ye have heard that it hath been said . . . But I say unto you . . .” (And it is remarkable that here He quarrels even with the saying from *Leviticus*, finding its word *neighbour* too narrow to do justice to

the whole meaning of love). The lapse of time has shown Him to have been right in both respects. The *agapē* of the early Christianity community, though there is nothing in the principle of it that is foreign to the best life of any people, has nevertheless turned out to be, in the pure perfection to which it was elevated by Our Lord, as genuinely new and re-creative a value as any with which ethical history anywhere acquaints us. What is there that on the one hand has proved to be more in line with the highest conscience of mankind as a whole, or that on the other has worked more revolutions in men's dealings with one another and has in it more power to work revolutions yet to be, than just Christian charity and love ?

And now let us turn to the Christian teaching about God.

## IV

The Christian thought of God appears in the New Testament as the natural and necessary accompaniment of the Christian teaching about human life, the new insight into ideal humanity carrying with it an equally new understanding of the nature of Deity. The logic of faith leads directly and inevitably from the discovery that,

*Μείξων δὲ τούτων ἡ ἀγάπη,*

“The greatest of these is love,”

to the further realisation that,

*‘Ο Θεὸς ἀγάπη εστίν,*

“God is love.”

And the two sentences together may well be taken to express in brief the whole essence of Christianity.

“God is love.” I do not think I need take time to prove to you that that is the one

supreme piece of good news which every New Testament writer is, in his different manner, concerned to publish to the world. Through all the Johannine literature the words ring like a refrain. Paul's Gospel may seem at first more difficult to summarise, yet what is the gist and marrow of it but just this: that, sinners though we be, God nevertheless loves us and is willing, of His free grace, and quite irrespective of any merit on our part, to receive us into His fellowship? Of Christian history as a whole the same thing is true. What is it that lies behind, and gives unity to, all the confusing varieties of creed and dogma and theological system, if not the joyful Christian persuasion that the heart of the Eternal has been manifested in Jesus Christ as a heart of love?

The question has, however, been raised whether this Christian news about God can, like the new ethical insight on which it

ultimately rests, be traced back to the mind of Jesus Himself ; and, as you know, a number of very distinguished scholars have recently felt themselves obliged to answer this question in the negative. Their view is that, in His attitude to God, Jesus Himself was not a Christian but a Jew, and that He Himself never realised, as did the first generation of His followers, the profound theological implications of the new spirit which He manifested in His life and in His death. For instance, Dr. McGiffert writes :

“Jesus’ idea of God was wholly Jewish. At no point, so far as we can judge from the Synoptic Gospels, did he go beyond His people’s thought of God. . . . So far as the God of the Christians is different from the God of the Jews, it is due not to Jesus’ teaching about God, but to the teaching of Paul and those who came after, or still more to the personality of Jesus and the

interpretation His followers put upon it."<sup>1</sup>

If this were true, it would mean that in the origin of Christianity we are confronted with a case of what we have already referred to as a fairly familiar historical phenomenon, namely, the temporary lagging of religious behind ethical insight.

I would venture to suggest to you, however, that this is exactly what we do not find. Indeed I should say that there are few things about the Synoptic Gospels which are more impressive than the perfect harmony that there is in them between the attitude to life which they recommend and the thought of God which they inculcate. The spirit which Jesus Himself manifested in His dealings with men and His teaching about the manner in which God deals with them, so far from conflicting

<sup>1</sup> *The God of the Early Christians* (American Edition), p. 21.

with one another, seem to melt into a single whole, and to be covered by the same phrases and even illustrated by the same parables. If, for instance, we take the three features of Jesus' outlook on life singled out by Professors Foakes-Jackson and Lake as marking the clearest divergences from the current ethical standards, I venture to say that every one of them is in the Synoptic Gospels related to the thought of God. The first, you will remember, was the counsel not to confine our love to those who love us, but to love also those who are hostile to us ; but Jesus does not give us that counsel without adding that by so doing we shall be but imitating our Heavenly Father who also " is kind unto the unthankful and the evil." And what is that but the universal Christian message that God rewards us, not according to our deserts, returning evil for evil upon us, but according to the inexhaustible riches of His own

free grace and love ? The second point was the attitude of Jesus to publicans and sinners. The newness of it is well brought out by the distinguished Jewish scholar, Dr. Montefiore, who says :

“ The summons not to wait till they meet you on your sheltered and orderly path, but to go forth and seek out and redeem the sinner and the fallen, the passion to heal and bring back to God the wretched and the outcast—all this I do not find in Rabbinism ; *that* form of love seems lacking.”<sup>1</sup>

“ Surely this is a new note, something which we have not yet heard in the Old Testament or of *its* heroes, something which we do not hear in the Talmud or of *its* heroes. . . . The virtues of repentance are gloriously praised in the Rabbinical literature, but this direct search for, and appeal to, the sinner are new and moving notes of high import and significance.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “The Spirit of Judaism” in *The Beginnings of Christianity* (ed. Jackson and Lake), Vol. I, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from Montefiore’s *Synoptic Gospels* by Moffatt, *Theology of the Gospels*, p. 125.

Nothing, however, could be clearer than that it is in the name of God that Jesus thus seeks out the sinners and welcomes them back to a new life. It is God's mercy He is bringing to them, not His own. It is true that He tells the story of the Lost Sheep to justify His own attitude in receiving sinners and eating with them, but when He has finished telling it, it is only of Heaven's mercy that He speaks.

“ I say unto you that likewise there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.”

And, once more, could there be a better summary than that of the characteristic Pauline and Christian Gospel? And as for the third point, Jesus' new attitude to the Law, it seems equally clear to me that it definitely carried with it a correspondingly

new conception of the mind and will of the Law-giver. So He quoted : “ I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.”

It would appear to be true, then, not only that what Jesus believes about God is the perfect counterpart and necessary corollary of what He believes about human life, but also that He Himself presented it as such. Do we not indeed find Him explicitly arguing that we must think of God in terms of what we have found to be best in human life ? God, He would say to us, is infinitely better than our human best, and yet our human best is the most reliable key we possess to His nature and the manner of His dealings with men. So the appeals which Jesus makes to our faith regularly take the form of a “ How much more . . ! ” —an argument *a fortiori*, as the logicians call it.

“ What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a

stone? Or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent? If ye then, evil as ye are, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him?"<sup>1</sup>

"After this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father which art in Heaven . . . . forgive us our debts, as [even] we ourselves have forgiven our debtors."<sup>2</sup>

Nothing, indeed, could be plainer than that in the beauty and nobility of the best family life Jesus finds not only the secret of good conduct but also the secret of what God is like. It is because He believes that all men are destined to be brothers that He believes God to be pre-eminently a Father. And just as the former belief is the heart and soul of the Christian ethic, so the latter belief is the heart and soul of the Christian

<sup>1</sup> *Matthew*, vii, 9-11.

<sup>2</sup> *Matthew*, vi, 9, 12. The rendering of the last clause is Dr. Moffatt's.

religion. Here, then, is the gist of Christianity for you in a single sentence—and it is the Christianity of Jesus no less than that of Paul or Athanasius or Luther : *At the centre of the Universe there is That which is more like a father's loving heart than like anything else we know.*

But what is there about this belief that is new ? The answer, once more, has two sides to it. On the one hand we must realise that every constituent element in the Christian Gospel had to some extent been foreshadowed in earlier religious history. The love and the fatherhood of God had been taught before and had indeed been in some sort implicit in human religion from its earliest beginnings. In the Old Testament especially you will find them again and again insisted on in the noblest and most moving terms. On the other hand it is only in the New Testament that they seem to be given a really primary,

and, as it were, over-arching significance. In the New Testament love is at last elevated to the supreme and all-determining place in the character of God ; and it is so elevated just because its full meaning and beauty and power are now at last understood. And I am myself sufficiently convinced that the change goes back to the mind of our Lord Himself. It seems to me that just as Jesus recommended men to follow the way of love rather than the way of mere justice in their dealings with one another, so there is evidence that love takes the place of justice in His mind as the supremest attribute of God. Instead of mercy being subordinated in the Divine character to justice (as it is in a judge), justice now seems at last to be subordinated to mercy and love (as it is in a father). After all, it is a very vital question that is here suggested to our minds—whether the spiritual Universe is a Law-court or a

Father's House ; whether it be meticulous, compensatory Justice which dwells at its centre or limitless Generosity and large-hearted Sympathy. And it seems to me that the issue is definitely raised in not a few Gospel passages, and that in these passages it is the teaching of Jesus that God is not to be thought of at all as being just ; which does not, of course, mean that He is unjust, but rather that He is more than just, that His attitude to sinful men transcends justice as much as does a good father's attitude to his children.

“ Love your enemies, bless them that curse you . . . that ye may be children of your Father which is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

“ Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again . . . and ye shall be children of the

Most High ; for he is kind unto the unthankful and the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father is also merciful."

" Friend, I do thee no wrong ; didst not thou agree with me for a penny ? Take that thine is, and go thy way ; I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own ? Dost thou look with envy, because I am generous ? " <sup>1</sup>

" I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."

And in that loveliest of Gospel pages, the parable of the Prodigal Son, it is this same lesson which seems to be expressly taught. The elder son in the parable stands for fair-minded, distributive justice ; the father stands for limitless, uncalculating

<sup>1</sup> The last sentence is from Dr. Moffatt's translation.

love and generosity ; and so we have the old teaching and the new set side by side for our better understanding of the difference between them.

“ Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment : and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends : But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad : for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found.”

I feel myself that it is just here that we come upon the most distinctive part of the Christian message. For long ages men had believed, and all the great religions of the

world have always taught, that (in Carlyle's phrase) "the great Soul of the World is just," and that, if we ourselves act righteously, we shall be fairly and even kindly dealt with by the Most High. But the Christian Gospel gives us a more joyful assurance still, an assurance more suited to the needs of sinful men such as we all are. It assures us that at the heart of things there is better even than fair play, and nothing less than active out-going Love. It assures that God is even more than a fair-minded Judge: He is a tender-hearted Shepherd, a loving and forgiving Father.

In our own time there has been much talk of a discrepancy between the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of Paul. Well, the differences may go deep, but they do not go to the bottom. The Gospel of Jesus and the Gospel of Paul I believe to be, at the heart of them, identically the same.

For the good news for which Christianity stood in the mind of Paul, and which led him to embrace it in preference to Judaism, was nothing else than this ; that God is not a Judge with a pair of scales in His hands Who rewards men according to their deserts, but a fond and loving Father Who, out of His loving-kindness made manifest in Jesus Christ, is ever ready to extend His grace to those who, however undeserving, are willing to receive it with a humble heart. As he says himself :

“ No distinctions are drawn. All have sinned, all have come short of the glory of God, but they are justified for nothing by His grace.”<sup>1</sup>

## V

Now it is of course true that there is not a little in the Synoptic Gospels about the

<sup>1</sup> *Romans*, iii, 22-24. Moffatt's translation.

justice of God, about His punishment of sin, about His stern demeanour to sinners and even about His wrath. And what I have been insisting upon, as being the core of the Christian message, is not that God is not Justice and does not punish sinners and is not angry towards them, but rather that His justice and His punishment and His anger are all made the servants of His love. That is to say, they are the justice and punishment and anger of a father, not of a judge : as it is argued in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, “ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons ; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ? ” A number of recent writers, however, have gone further and taken another view ; and I shall now say something about their view, if only by way of illustration of the general argument of

these lectures. The late C. W. Emmet and the late Lily Dougall in their book *The Lord of Thought*, and Miss Dougall in her posthumously-published little volume *God's Way with Man*, have argued, in marked opposition to the current tendency of New Testament criticism as a whole, and yet not altogether unconvincingly (though I think, indeed, that at best they will be held to have over-stated their case), that the references to Divine justice and anger and punishment in the Synoptic Gospels formed no part of the original teaching of Jesus, but are to be taken rather as reflecting the religious temper of the early Christian community. On this very controversial question I will make no pronouncement, but will only call your attention to the fact that in our own day there has been much searching of heart as to the supposed educative and disciplinary value of punishment. The old maxim

“Spare the rod and spoil the child” is coming to be more and more questioned; and the new movements towards prison-reform are pointing in the same direction. The question becomes ever more insistent how far, if love be wise, it really will punish.

Now there is no doubt at all that a question of this sort is suggested by some things in the teaching of Jesus, and there is as little doubt that it is to the spirit and influence of Jesus that these present searchings of heart go back, rightly or wrongly, for their initial inspiration. It is quite plain that one of Jesus’ most profound convictions—I would say also, one of His greatest discoveries—was that love and forgiveness have more power to constrain, to win, and to educate, than have anger and retribution. “Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose it will be the one to whom he

forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.”<sup>1</sup> Whether this implies the ultimate supersession of the idea of punishment is another and much more difficult question ; but let me remind you of a very remarkable old poem called *Discipline* by George Herbert.

“ Throw away thy rod,  
Throw away thy wrath :  
    O my God,  
Take the gentle path. . . .

Then let wrath remove ;  
Love will do the deed :  
    For with love  
Stonie hearts will bleed.

Love is swift of foot ;  
Love’s a man of warre,  
    And can shoot,  
And can hit from farre.

Who can ’scape his bow ?  
That which wrought on thee,  
    Brought thee low,  
Needs must work on me.

<sup>1</sup> *Luke*, vii, 42-43.

Throw away thy rod ;  
Though man frailties hath,  
Thou art God :  
Throw away thy wrath."

And I would commend at least to your careful attention Miss Dougall's chapter entitled "Beyond Justice" in her last little book. "The time has come," she argues, "when we must ask if we can serve the two masters—deified law and deified grace, supreme justice and supreme mercy."<sup>1</sup> Put to yourselves the question whether there is or is not present in the ethical teaching of Jesus an element which is destined in the end to supersede the whole machinery of justice and of law. Ask yourselves also whether in the highest thought and the best literature of the present day, especially since the War, there is not a very distinct groping in the same direction. I will give you one random

<sup>1</sup> *God's Way with Man*, p. 115.

example. In Mr. Galsworthy's recent novel *The White Monkey*, there is a young man called Wilfrid Desert who has come through four years of trench warfare, and who thus describes the effect it has had on him :

“ Illusion is off. No religion and no philosophy will satisfy me—words, all words. I have still my senses—no thanks to them ; am still capable—I find—of passion ; can still grit my teeth and grin ; have still some feeling of trench loyalty, but whether real or just a complex, I don't know.”

In one scene we find him pleading with the head of his firm for the forgiveness of a workman who had done some wrong. The head defends his action in dismissing the man.

“ I don't think it's hard,” said Mr. Danby, “ only just.”

“ Are you a judge of justice ? ”

o

“ I hope so.”

“ Try four years’ hell, and have another go.”

And a little later :

“ We simply couldn’t conduct our business, my dear young man, without scrupulous honesty in everybody. To make no distinction between honesty and dishonesty would be quite unfair. . . . Let us put it that there are rules of the game which must be observed, if society is to function at all.”

Desert smiled, “ Oh, hang rules ! Do it as a favour . . . ”

“ I should only be too glad, but it’s a matter—well, of conscience, if you like.”

And outside the door, Desert greets his waiting friend with the words :

“ No go. The old blighter’s too just.”

It is not my purpose to pronounce upon the difficult and momentous ethical

questions that are here involved. Indeed I am unable to pronounce upon them, for my mind is by no means fully made up about them. What I would emphasise is only that here, as everywhere, the settlement of the ethical issue must bring in its wake the settlement of the religious issue too. *If* love is destined in any sense to supersede legal justice in our human affairs, and *if* the infliction of pain is no longer to be regarded as a legitimate and effective instrument of human love, then Miss Dougall is right and we must extrude all ideas of punishment, and of legal and retributive justice from our thought of the Most High. For the one secret of true religious thinking is to hold at all costs to what Professor Pringle-Pattison has called "the principle of interpretation by the highest we know."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy*,  
p. 340.

## VI

I have now done my best to put before you what I believe to be the gist of the Christian teaching. Yet I think you will all feel that, if I stopped here, there would be something seriously lacking from my exposition—something which, though it has all the time been coming within our sight, I have not yet sufficiently and expressly insisted upon. For there is no doubt at all that the crowning glory of the Christian religion is that it is not mere teaching, or mere talk, or mere words of any sort, but that in it the Word was made flesh. We preachers and teachers often wonder, do we not, how much good we do to men by everlastingly talking at their heads? In some ways what is wrong with the world is not that there is too little teaching in it, but that there is too much—too many winds of doctrine, too many floating and insubstantial opinions that lack the backing of actual

embodiment in a living example. For it is never mere teaching that saves men. "The whole history of religion," writes one of the foremost modern students of it, C. P. Tiele, "proves that the Word must always become flesh in order to gain admission to the human heart."<sup>1</sup> So it is a quite indisputable historical fact that it is even more in what He was than in what He said that the significance of Jesus lies. In the sphere of morals, His example has been even more powerful than His teaching. In the sphere of faith, the God revealed in Himself has meant even more to men than the God revealed in His words. It is true, certainly, that it is difficult to find any teaching anywhere in which faith in God is recommended with quite so strong a note of joyful self-abandonment as it is in the teaching of Jesus ; but more notable even than the faith He taught is the faith

<sup>1</sup> *Elements of the Science of Religion*, Vol. II, p. 254.

He displayed ; and more notable and vital still is the power that was, and still quite apparently is, in that faith to call forth faith in others. It is true, again, that the doctrine that God is Love is nowhere put forward so clearly and unequivocally as in the Christian teaching ; but no good historian can deny that, even more than to the possession of this teaching, Christianity has owed its power to its possession of a Lord and Master in Whom the love of God was *manifest*—in Whom, as we read in one of the Pastoral Epistles, “ the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.” The New Testament declaration is not merely that Jesus taught men a truer doctrine about God than had ever been taught before, but that in Jesus God came nearer to man than He had ever before come. In the character and person of Jesus, in His life and in His death, even more than in all that He said, men felt

that the face of God was made plain and the love of God revealed. It is remarkable, for instance,—remarkable, and also, as I think, instructive, if only we are careful to draw the right lesson from it—how few are the references in St. Paul's writings to anything that Jesus said in comparison with his references to what He was. Nay more, it is not even what He was that seems to have meant most to St. Paul, but rather what God was in Him, what He revealed God to be. When St. Paul tells the Corinthians that "God was in Christ," <sup>1</sup> when he tells the Colossians that Jesus is "the portrait of the Unseen God," <sup>2</sup> it is not a discovery about Jesus that he is announcing so much as a discovery about God. "God proves his love for us by this, that Christ died for us," he writes in *Romans*. It is a thought of which the New

<sup>1</sup> *II Corinthians*, v. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Colossians*, i, 15.

Testament is full, and is indeed its central theme. "In this," says another writer, "was manifested the love of God toward us . . . . Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son . . ." Dean Inge is right when he says that what Jesus came to teach was "not that He was like God, but that God was like Himself."<sup>1</sup>

I am sure that, if we understand it properly, there is nothing that need puzzle or mystify us, though there is much to call forth our reverent wonder and praise, in this great significance that is attached in Christianity to the person of its founder. After all, what else have I been saying throughout these chapters but that it is in our values that God is revealed to us? And values are not, surely, abstract entities which can exist apart from living personalities. A value, indeed, only becomes valuable when it becomes incarnated in a personal being. Hence it is not in

<sup>1</sup> *Outspoken Essays*, Second Series, p. 49.

abstract nouns like love and mercy and pity and self-sacrifice that God comes near to us, and reveals himself to our hearts, but in loving and merciful and unselfish persons. "Man," says Chrysostom, "is the true Shekinah." "There are as many theophanies," says John Scotus Erirena, "as there are saintly souls."<sup>1</sup> Why then should we think it strange when Christianity bids us find God, not in the distant interstellar spaces, nor in those mysterious signs and omens dear to the hearts of the old diviners, nor yet in the ways of nature as revealed by modern science, but in the soul of One Who dwelt among us, full of grace and truth?

When Jesus wished to make manifest to men the redemptive love of God, He invented the story of the Prodigal Son, and it is, I suppose, the most beautiful story that has ever been invented by

<sup>1</sup> *De Divisione Naturae*, I, 8.

anybody. Yet we must not forget that behind the story told, and giving reality and conviction to the telling of it, there was the character and the life of the Teller. As Wilhelm Herrmann used to say, “Jesus did not write the story of the Prodigal Son on a sheet of paper for men who knew nothing of Himself.”<sup>1</sup> If He had, it would no doubt have been forgotten long ago. In truth there is for us another story that is more wonderful still, a story stranger and more beautiful than any fiction, and yet one which Jesus Himself could not fully tell, because the first chapters of it were only being enacted as He spoke. But when, a few years afterwards, Peter and Paul and John went about in their turn to prove that same redemptive love of God to the men of their own day, they were able to preach to them

<sup>1</sup> See *Communion with God*, English translation, Revised Edition, p. 132.

a better sermon and to announce to them a fuller Christianity than even the Master Himself had been able to do ; for instead of telling them the parable of the Prodigal Son, they could now tell them the history of the Passion of Christ.

And so a final truth emerges. For just as it is true that Christianity had its origin, not in an abstract system of doctrine and code of morals, but in a living Person ; and just as it is true that what gives continuity to our tortuous Christian history as a whole is much rather its constant reference to that living Person than the persistence within it of any unchanged body of teaching or of practice ; so in this latter day it is true that what makes a man a Christian is neither his intellectual acceptance of certain ideas nor his conformity to a certain rule but his possession of a certain Spirit and his participation in a certain Life. To be a Christian, as we

cannot too often remind ourselves, is not merely to think this and the other, nor is it merely to do this and to leave the other undone; it is rather to have living and personal experience of the fellowship of Christian love. It is to be rooted and grounded in *agapē*. It is to know, with all the saints of all the ages, something of the breadth and length and depth and height of the love that was in the heart of Christ and, illumined and strengthened by that knowledge, to place all our reliance upon the love of God and be filled with all His fulness.

## CHAPTER V

### HOW FAITH ARISES IN THE SOUL

#### I

I PROPOSE that in this last chapter we address ourselves especially to the needs of those who have difficulty about the acceptance of religious belief. That these form a large class by themselves in our modern world none of you will be disposed to deny. There are many who will tell you frankly that they are entirely without religious belief. There are many more who will tell you that, though they have some disposition to believe, they nevertheless lack the full assurance of faith. There are others who say that they believe in God, but that His bare existence is about all they do believe in ; and still others who

say that, though firmly convinced of the general truth of religion in the broadest sense, they are yet dubious about the special truth of Christianity. I hope that the last two chapters have done something to meet most of the problems that are here suggested, but there is one difficulty that is still likely to be pressed. I can imagine some troubled seeker saying to us : " I see now what religion is, but I do not see why I am to believe it to be true. You have shown me that religion is essentially a faith in the revelatory character of our values, but you have not shown me how I am to get that faith." This is the question which we must now set ourselves to answer.

In trying to answer it we must, I think, take nothing for granted, but must begin at the very beginning. That is to say, we must begin by putting to the inquirers this very basic counter-question : Have

you a firm grip upon your values themselves? For that, after all, is the first vital point. As has been well said (by Professor Cairns), faith "proceeds first by getting its moral values right. . . . Until a man recognises the nature and authority of the moral imperative, he has simply not got the actual facts of his world-problem before him."<sup>1</sup> There is no use at all (as, indeed, preachers have in every age known) in attempting to bring home the evidence of religious truth to a man whose hold upon goodness and love and honour is in any wise loose. How can a man expect to know whether or not these things bear upon them the marks of being ultimate realities, if he does not properly and experimentally know what they are, or if he allows any kind of moral scepticism or indifferentism to blur his clear awareness of their claim? How can

<sup>1</sup> *The Reasonableness of the Christian Faith*, p. 83.

a man who refuses to look Duty in the face ever hope to find God ?

It will perhaps be objected that Duty is not after all so clear and luminous a thing as we are trying to make out. It is often very difficult to know what we ought to do, or to distinguish right from wrong. Besides, it will be said, there is no unanimity in the world about the principles of morality but, on the contrary, much diversity of opinion. The Hindus lately thought it a pious duty to burn widows on the funeral pyre of their deceased husbands, whereas to us Westerners such a practice seemed nothing less than murder. We think monogamy to be a fundamental moral principle, but many races practise polygamy with the clearest conscience in the world. The fact is, our objectors will proceed, that moral ideas have had a natural history like all other ideas. They have grown up in the course of evolution ; and where

the course of evolution has been different, ethical standards have been different too.

Now I do not doubt that most of these statements have much truth in them; but their truth is, at best, one-sided and is at all events largely irrelevant to the point I am here desirous of making. No matter what anybody may say about the difficulty of certain moral problems or the relativity of certain moral standards, I am prepared to lay it down that there is nothing in life of which we are more certain than we are of the broad outline of our duty. The certainty which attaches to our primary moral values is the greatest degree of certainty which it is given to the race of man to possess. Loyalty and love and honour; truthfulness and purity and unselfishness—there is no knowledge of which I am surer than the knowledge that these things are more to be sought than fine gold and that there is laid upon

me an absolute obligation to seek them, no matter at what cost to my own comfort or my own private pleasure and profit. Indeed I should myself be inclined to go further and to say that there is no other knowledge of which we are even so sure. That, at any rate, is the fundamental contention of Kant's philosophy—that in our consciousness of moral value, and in the sense of absolute obligation attaching to such value, we come nearer to the Absolute, and nearer also to absolute certainty, than we do in any other region of our experience. And Plato would have said just the same; he would have said that in our knowledge of the Good we are nearer the bed-rock of reality, and of absolute certainty, than we are in our knowledge of the external world as present to the senses. And I think that, without being philosophers, the men of our armies (of whom I spoke so much in the first of

these chapters) were conscious, and we are all conscious, of very much the same thing. We feel that, however difficult it is to know what to believe, there is always something which we know beyond all doubt to be worth doing. The search for the truth about the System of things in which we find ourselves enmeshed is long and arduous and has its moments of real despair. Science tells us some things about it, but scientific results are always of a provisional kind and may be to-morrow overthrown, and besides, they concern only the detailed machinery of the System and never its final purpose and meaning ; as has been said, "science can know nothing of the whole of anything, still less of the whole of all things." So we are often inclined to cry with Matthew Arnold and the whole nineteenth century that

" . . . we are here as on a darkling plain

Swept with confused alarms of struggle  
and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by  
night.”<sup>1</sup>

But there is always one gleam of light which penetrates that darkness—the light of love. When the night of doubt and of confusion is at its blackest, the values of right and noble conduct still stand firm. Here is something which no night of doubt can make doubtful. Here is the one thing which, if our evidence is at all reliable, the average man in the trenches seemed incapable of doubting. I may be in the direst uncertainty about the nature of this “scheme of things entire,” about its constitution and construction, about its origin and destined end; but I *know* that love is better than hate, that courage is better than cowardice and honour than treachery, and that it is

<sup>1</sup> *Dover Beach*.

right to help one's fellow-traveller out of the ditch and to pour oil and wine into his wounds. There may be little to know, and little assurance in the knowing of it, but there is always plenty to do and, for the man who looks it straight in the face, plenty of assurance that it is worth doing. Do you remember Thomas Carlyle's famous advice to doubters ?

“ Let him who gropes painfully in darkness or uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen into day, lay this other precept well to heart, which to me was of invaluable service : ‘ *Do the Duty which lies nearest thee*,’ which thou knowest to be a Duty ! Thy second Duty will already have become clearer.” <sup>1</sup>

We are told in the biography of the greatest of nineteenth-century preachers, Frederick Robertson of Brighton, that when his

<sup>1</sup> *Sartor Resartus*, “ The Everlasting Yea.”

night of doubt was at its blackest, when in respect of everything else he was left with nothing but "an awful desolate Perhaps," one certainty still remained to him—the certainty that, as he put it, "it must be right to do right." Surely we have here a firm standing-ground on which it is ever possible for us to fall back. Surely in love and loyalty, in righteousness and honour, in chivalry and unselfishness, we have an unshifting platform on which all good men may meet, doubters of every degree, believers of every communion. On these, as on a sure foundation, our common life is built, our society and all its standards, our international experiments and all their promise.

## II

Now I have been at so great pains to emphasise the security of our common

values and the absolute nature of our primary moral certainties, just because I am so sure that it is out of these values and certainties that faith in God alone arises in the soul. It is always, if I might so put it, in the context of duty and of goodness that religious conviction comes. It is never possible for a man to have a firmer hold upon God than he has upon duty. It is never possible for a man to be any surer of the reality of God than he is of the loveliness of love and the ugliness of falsehood and selfishness. The only assurance of God which religion ever promises is an assurance which is of the same kind, of the same texture, as our assurance of our ultimate values. But if that kind of assurance is enough for us—and which of us could ask a better?—then there does seem good hope that by being faithful to our values we can really attain to it.

The New Testament, at all events, holds out this hope to us in the most confident way. Though the fact has not always received the attention it deserves, yet nothing could really be clearer than that it is always the moral conditions of belief that are emphasised in the New Testament rather than the intellectual ones. This is not to say that there *are* no intellectual conditions of faith. Of course there are: for obviously no being who was not gifted with a rational nature could rise to faith in God. For that matter a man cannot be even a moral agent unless he is gifted with at least ordinary intelligence. But the point is rather that the process of thought from which faith emerges is intellectually of so simple a character as to be within the reach of the most ordinary understanding if only it has in its firm possession the moral premises from which to set out. So the vision of God is never promised by

Jesus or His New Testament followers to the clever or the learned, but always and only to those who are pure and true and simple of heart. The assurance of God's accompanying love is not put forward as the fruit of erudite investigation, but as the fruit of moral earnestness and loyalty. "Blessed are the pure in heart," said Jesus, "for they shall see God." "If thine eye be single," He said again, "thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." "I praise thee, Father," so ran one of His prayers, "for hiding all this from the wise and learned and revealing it to the simple-minded."<sup>1</sup> "And the Jews marvelled," we read in the Fourth Gospel, "saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any

<sup>1</sup> Moffatt's translation of *Matthew*, xi, 25.

man will to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." "A good conscience," we read in one of the Epistles, "which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." "Holiness," we read in another, "without which no man shall see the Lord." "Whosoever sinneth," we read in the *First Epistle of John*, "hath not seen him, neither know Him." And again, "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." And finally, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." Everywhere in these writings faith is a possession, not of the sharp-witted and the clear-headed, but of the true-hearted and loyal. Its closest associates are always a pure heart and a good conscience.

It is true that to our very great loss and confusion this aspect of New Testament teaching has frequently been lost sight of

within the Christian Church, the moral conditions of belief being almost entirely forgotten and purely intellectual conditions put in their place. But here the mystics have done good service by raising their voice in ceaseless protest. In his fine book on *Christian Mysticism* Dean Inge enumerates four propositions which he believes to be the four fundamental tenets of all mysticism. With the first two we are not here concerned ; but the third is that “without holiness no man may see the Lord” ; and the fourth is that “our guide on the upward path, the true hierophant of the mysteries of God, is love.”<sup>1</sup> The Protestant Reformation, at least as originally represented in Luther, stood in no small part for a re-discovery of this same truth. And a new and stronger emphasis on it was the very main-spring of the Ritschlian movement

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Mysticism*, pp. 6-8.

in Germany. A famous English rediscovery of it was in Robertson of Brighton's preaching, and especially in his celebrated sermon on "Obedience as the Organ of Spiritual Knowledge." In the final paragraph of that sermon he draws a vivid word-picture of the state of an honest man's mind when all certainty seems to be dissolved into an "awful, desolate *Perhaps*," and then he closes thus :

"In such an hour what remains ? I reply, Obedience. Leave those thoughts for the present. Act—be merciful and gentle—honest: force yourself to abound in little services: try to do good to others: be true to the Duty that you know. *That* must be right, whatever else is uncertain. And by all the laws of the human heart, by the word of God, you shall not be left in doubt. Do that much of the will of God which is plain to you,

and ' You shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' " <sup>1</sup>

### III

But now let us take a step further and try to understand how this can be. How can our powers of discernment be thus dependent upon our sense of duty? How can faith in God thus be a natural accompaniment of loyalty to our values?

The answer is that faith in God naturally accompanies such loyalty because it is a thing that is itself very closely akin to it. Indeed we may say that to believe in duty and to believe in God are not, for the man of faith, two different beliefs, but only one belief. To believe in God is, at least in its beginnings, hardly more than a deeper way of believing in duty. What happens is simply that to the seeker, in

<sup>1</sup> *Sermons*, Vol. II, p. 105.

the course of his loyal striving to do the right and eschew the wrong, and to do "the utmost for the highest," there comes—sometimes with the light of a sudden revelation, but more often slowly and gradually—the realisation of a new and deeper meaning that there is in duty and goodness. He has been believing all along that goodness and love and honour are the things that matter most in all the world, and he has been seeking these things with a single-hearted devotedness. But now there grows up in his mind something like a conviction that these things are the very pillars on which the world is built. For how could they matter as they do, if they be not central to the System of Things in which he has his humble part to play? All along he has been believing that there is laid upon him an absolute obligation to do what is right and to follow the narrow and difficult way of duty and

of selfless service. But now he comes to feel, in a clear and explicit way, that it is nothing less than the hidden nature of things that is laying this obligation upon him. For how can he be obliged to do the right if, in the last resort, the Universe does not care whether he do the right or the wrong? “*I must* seek the highest,” he says, and there is nothing of which he is more sure; but whence can that *must* derive, if not from the nature of things? Why must he, if he be part and parcel of a System for which the highest is as the lowest and the lowest as the highest?

I do not mean to suggest, of course, that the ordinary man in whose soul faith comes to birth ever asks himself these questions in a self-conscious way. What actually happens in the large majority of cases is no doubt simply that, without his knowing it, duty begins to wear a new aspect to him and to acquire a new

significance. Perhaps, most of all, it is a sense of the *purpose* of things that comes to him. He begins to feel that he was *meant* to seek the highest, that to this end was he born ; and above all there grows upon him the feeling that in seeking it he is fulfilling his appointed destiny and putting himself in line with Something greater than himself. The truth is that no man to whom there comes the strong sense that in doing his duty he is doing what is *required* of him is far from the true faith. Was not the very nerve-centre of the faith of Jesus Christ Himself just this sense of Higher Appointment that accompanied Him in all His work ; the sense of being sent ; the sense that, in doing what He had to do, He was doing the will of Him that sent Him ? Such a sense is the most blessed accompaniment to which any man can work. Perhaps it is a thing that comes, in some

measure, and sooner or later, to all good workmen. And it is what we mean by faith in God.

Sometimes it seems to come imperceptibly and as with noiseless feet. Sometimes what happens is not so much that a man begins to believe as that he begins to realise he has been believing all the time. He has all along believed in the absolute worth-whileness of righteousness and love and service ; he has all along felt that he was in the world to seek these things and that, if he did not seek them, he would be missing his destined end and be, in some sort, a disappointment, not merely to himself and to his fellows, but somehow also to That which caused him and his fellows to be. And now, it comes to him, perhaps with sudden surprise, that this belief is religion.

Of course, I am dealing here with a particular kind of man—with the man who

sets out without any conscious religious belief at all or who, having been brought up in such a belief, has afterwards entirely lost it ; and I am trying to trace the way in which faith makes a new beginning within him. But I am far from meaning to suggest that this kind of case is the normal one. On the contrary, the normal order of things is undoubtedly that our values should come to us from the beginning in a religious dress, and Duty as the "Stern Daughter of the Voice of God." The attempt to regard the moral law as expressive merely of human and utilitarian preferences, or as reflecting purely human arrangements, is very far from being either natural or primitive to the human race. Mankind as a whole was not moral before it was religious, but from the beginning regarded its moral standards as being in some deep sense rooted in the real order of things ; and the same is normally true

of the individual also. What we call "mere morality" is but a latter-day abstraction, and it is an abstraction which has never yet shown itself to possess any social stability. Where no disturbing influence enters in, our knowledge of good and evil is naturally, and without further ado, taken by us to be a knowledge of the ultimate principles of the constitution of the System to which we belong.

## IV

Now there is one question which is sure to be asked of us at this point. We are sure to be asked whether it is possible to express this conviction that we have of the deep grounding of our values, in the form of a valid, logical proof. Can we construct a really watertight argument to show that our moral consciousness bears credible witness to the real nature of things ?

My answer to this question has two sides to it. On the one hand, I have no doubt at all that such an argument can be constructed, and perhaps without very great difficulty; for religious faith is as much a product of our rational natures as anything else is. It is true that the first attempt made in this direction, that of Kant himself, was far from being a successful one; but the same can by no means be said of a recent book like Professor Sorley's *Moral Values and the Idea of God*. On the other hand, I have the very gravest doubts as to the effectiveness of such a formal argument, when taken by itself. It may indeed have a negative effectiveness in clearing away certain artificial hindrances to belief, and especially certain intellectual cobwebs woven by modern positivist philosophers; but it is difficult to think that any mere argument could ever directly bring faith in God to birth in a man's soul.

Perhaps it is true that we are coming more and more to doubt the value of formal argumentation of any kind, and to wonder how many people have ever really been led to embrace a new view of things as the result of debate. It is the experience of life that changes a man's outlook, and not the discovery of a well-turned syllogism. Argument is at its strongest in pure mathematics, and in mathematical physics, and in statistics, and in regions where experimental methods of induction can be applied ; but in the region of art and morals and religion, and in all regions where we are concerned with sensitiveness to fine gradations of value, its effectiveness is much more open to question. There is no good in trying to argue with a man who tells you that Martin Tupper's poetry is better than Milton's or that Sankey's tunes are as good as Bach's. There is no good in hurling syllogisms at a man who tells you

that he sees nothing mean in kicking his fellow when he is down and nothing noble in self-sacrifice. Valid enough arguments can no doubt be constructed to prove that he is wrong ; but it is not argument, nor talk of any sort, that is likely to persuade him of his error, but only things like personal influence and deeper experience and the hard contact with life. It is the same with religious belief ; and I think that if we look at the matter closely, we can see why this should be so. For if we are right in believing that it is out of our consciousness of value that religious belief arises, then every proper and valid argument for religious belief must have as its major premise the awareness of some moral value. It must always be an argument from the beauty and the claim of goodness to the reality of Eternal Goodness, and from the loveliness of love to the Love of God. And that being so, we

can readily understand how all such arguments produce conviction upon us only in proportion to our appreciation of the values upon which they rest. Religion is essentially a matter of finding a deeper meaning in duty, a deeper and more prophetic significance in our values; and it is not by sitting still and regarding them in idle contemplation, or by bringing to bear upon them a greater logical acumen than we had previously done, that we shall become more firmly persuaded of this meaning and significance, but by doing them and living them. The process of reasoning by which faith rises to the thought of God, which is the same as to say the path which leads from our values to reality, is so simple and direct that no man has ever been prevented from finding it by slowness of wits or deficiency of logical power, but rather by *too much* logic of a false and abstract kind or else by something lacking from

his living experience. Intuitive insight will here always precede formal proof, and where there is as yet no such insight, formal proof is likely to be powerless to convince. In a word, everything depends, not upon the rigour of our logic, but upon the depth and the vigour and the richness of our practical acquaintance with the realities from which our logic starts. Here is a fine passage from a published letter by the late Baron von Hügel on *The Preliminaries to Religious Belief*:

“ We get to know such realities, slowly, laboriously, intermittently, partially ; we get to know them, not inevitably nor altogether apart from our dispositions, but only if we are sufficiently awake to care to know them, sufficiently humble to welcome them, and sufficiently generous to pay the price continuously which is strictly necessary if this knowledge and love are not to shrink but to grow. We indeed

get to know realities in proportion as we become worthy to know them,—in proportion as we become less self-occupied, less self-centred, more outward-moving, less obstinate and insistent, more gladly lost in the crowd, more rich in giving all we have, and especially all we are, our very selves.”<sup>1</sup>

And yet, after all, argument has its uses even in so deep-lying and elemental a sphere as this. Perhaps I have already sufficiently indicated the form which I think such argument should take. It should consist simply in the attempt to bring to clear consciousness, and to express in precise language, the nature of the compulsion which in every age has led earnest seekers after righteousness to trust in an Eternal Righteousness, and has inspired devoted workers to believe that they are working for a more-than-human

<sup>1</sup> *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 104.

Cause. It is agreed that my consciousness of my highest practical values is accompanied by a clear recognition of their claim upon my allegiance. It is agreed that there is nothing of which I am more certain than that an absolute obligation is laid upon me to do the right and eschew the wrong. But what is it that thus obliges me, if it be not some larger order of things to which I stand related? How can values like truthfulness and unselfishness and courage have any claim upon me, if they are not grounded in the all-enclosing System to which I belong? How can the Ultimate Reality demand righteousness in me, if Itself be not righteous?

Perhaps some modern moralist will say that it is not the Ultimate Reality that demands righteousness in me, but only human society; and that the enclosing System, in which my ultimate values are grounded and from which my moral

obligation derives, is not the "scheme of things entire," but only the human species. I hope none of you will object to my characterising this as sheer nonsense. If it were true, it would mean that society itself was under no obligations and was conscious of no duty to do, or to require of its members, one thing rather than another. It would mean that whatever society as a whole chose to do or to demand was *ipso facto* right and good, its standards being entirely self-determined. But you and I know better than to believe these things. We know that society as a whole is as truly under obligation to follow the one strait path of righteousness as is the humblest individual within it. We know also that what the individual feels obliged to seek is not what society *wants*, or what it arbitrarily decrees, but rather what it ought to want, its *good*. And that means that he is conscious of standards that are

more than merely social. After all, a man's final allegiance is not to the particular animal species of which he is a member and to its private tastes and preferences, but to the Eternal Reality upon whose bosom he lies. Consequently if you say to men (as a writer like Mr. Bertrand Russell would say to them) that while society demands that they be true and tender and brave, the ultimate nature of things makes no such demand on them (being only a blind and brutal hulk of inanimate matter), it is a perfectly valid answer on their part to say, "Then we prefer the wider allegiance. Society may say what it likes, but we shall follow the ways of our Almighty Mother. Like her we shall not trouble about righteousness and truth at all." That, I say, would be a valid answer. But it is not a statement which any man could sincerely and unashamedly make, because every man

knows in his heart that he *must* trouble about righteousness and truthfulness, whether society demands these things of him or no.

It is, then, on this knowledge, and on these intimations of a trans-human reality given to us in our knowledge of good and evil, that religion builds. Does it seem a slender foundation? Does the rich and detailed fulness of our Christian assurance of God seem out of keeping with its origin in one little hint about the meaning of things that comes to us in the doing of our duty? Ah, but one little hint may have vast implications and lead to endless vistas of discernment! It was one little hint that came to Archimedes, to Newton, and to Einstein. And if the one little hint be this—that our values are grounded in reality, and that our highest values are consequently our best clues to the nature of reality—then how far can we not go

from that beginning ? We have already seen how the thought of God is bound immediately to arise. The Universe cannot demand righteousness and love of me, unless Itself be righteous and loving ; but how can anything be righteous and loving except a living Person ? That is why, at so early a stage in its history, religion made a firm and enduring alliance with animism, which is the doctrine that behind nature there is Soul. If duty mean anything, if conscience be not a lying voice, then at the heart of the Universe there is Life and Mind and Reason, because Goodness and Truth and Love. And that is not all ; for as we gain greater insight into the ways of love, so we rise to a higher and surer discernment of the ways of God. Every glimpse we get of a higher value in our dealings with one another is at the same time a further glimpse into the mind of the Most High. The Doctrine of the

Attributes of God, the Doctrine of Providence, the Doctrine of the Forgiveness of Sins and the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul are all based, in the last resort, on our practical acquaintance with the workings of love in the heart of man.

But not, thank God, with the workings of love in our own hearts as private individuals! If it were given to you and me to know no more about the ways of Divine Love than we can learn from the measure of love that we ourselves daily mete to our fellows, I fear we might still be in pagan darkness. It is from the souls and lives, not of ourselves but of others, that most of us have gained our highest insight into the meaning of love. As I quoted before from a great teacher of the Middle Ages, "There are as many revelations of God as there are saintly souls." And for the highest insight of all, it is to one soul and life that we must still turn—to the soul and to the life of

Him Whom to have seen is to have seen the Father. "Hereby know we what love is, that *he* laid down his life for us."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps some of you will feel that in talking thus we are seeming to make God too remote from human life. Is God, you will ask, merely a reality arrived at by inference, and with whom we can have no direct acquaintance? Such an impression however, can only have resulted from the necessity under which we have here placed ourselves of being severely analytic in our argument, breaking up the native and intuitive assurance of faith into so many successive steps of reasoning. The real truth is not that man at last concludes that his values imply the reality of God, but rather that from the beginning he finds God in his values. And it is God Himself that he finds, and no mere reflection of Him. Love is not merely like God, but in

<sup>1</sup> *I John*, iii, 16. Compare Moffatt's translation.

a real sense is God. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." <sup>1</sup> And so also positively, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." <sup>2</sup> Do you remember Matthew Arnold's paraphrase of Bernard of Clairvaux?

"'Tis God himself becomes apparent,  
when  
God's wisdom and God's goodness  
are displayed,  
For God of these his attributes is  
made."<sup>3</sup>

There is therefore no more intimate communion with God possible or thinkable than that which may be ours in the doing of our duty and in the pursuit of our values. As I have already indicated, I take it to be one of the clearest things in the teaching of Jesus that communion

<sup>1</sup> *I John*, iv, 8.

<sup>2</sup> *I John*, iv, 16.

<sup>3</sup> From the sonnet entitled "The Divinity."

with God is not something separate from the doing of our duty but, on the contrary, that it is only in the doing of our duty that we can commune with Him aright. This thought is finely stated by Canon Streeter :

“ The worship of God is not something different from the love of Humanity, the passion for the Beautiful, and the devotion to Truth ; it is not something which exists alongside of these and in addition to them, it is what these actually are whenever and in so far as they are realised in their highest form, in their true co-ordination, and in their real meaning. Conscious worship of the Divine is not an extra, it is the summary and explanation of every separate and departmental pursuit of the Ideal.”<sup>1</sup>

So we are often warned in the New

<sup>1</sup> *Concerning Prayer*, p. 245.

Testament against the habit of thinking of God as an object that can be immediately present to our perception quite independently of our values. "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."<sup>1</sup>

This, indeed, is the deep meaning of the Christian Doctrine of the Incarnation. For surely it was a true instinct which led the Christian Church to insist that it was not merely something *like* God (*似神者*, as they said) which men saw and knew in the love of Christ, but God's very self. When Paul said that "God was in Christ," he was not using the language of metaphor but was literally transcribing our common Christian experience. How *could* God come closer to men than He came in the love and life and death of Jesus Christ our Lord?

<sup>1</sup> *I John*, iv. 12.

## VI

We have now come to the end of our discussion, and I shall try to gather together the threads of it in a few concluding remarks. Let me carry you back to what was said in the first of these chapters about the common man's philosophy of life, as revealed to us on the battlefields of France. First, there were those lists, marvellously in agreement with one another, of the qualities of manhood which the common man admires — courage, comradeship, straightforwardness, humility, persistent cheerfulness, generosity and loyal devotion to duty. I think we shall all agree, as we look back on such a list as that, that there is at least nothing about the common man's values that need keep him away from the Christian Church. Then there were those indications, supported by a hardly less unanimous testimony, of the almost inarticulate faith that was with these men

through hardship and danger, and did not leave them in the hour of death. You will remember how one wrote: "If we could be said to have any philosophy of life at all, it would all have been comprehended in the one brief rule of doing the right thing." And you will remember how another writer took us a little further into the secret: "They declare, by what they are and do, that there is a worth-whileness in effort and sacrifice. Without saying so, they commit themselves to 'the Everlasting Arms.'" Or again: "They only know—a wonderful majority of them know—that something great and righteous wants them and requires of them their help."<sup>1</sup>

*Something great and righteous wants us and requires of us our help*—could there be a better summary than that of the faith that comes to loyal workers, the faith that worketh by love, the faith that

<sup>1</sup> References in Chapter I.

was in Our Lord Himself? If we have learned anything in these chapters about the meaning of faith, it is this: that it begins by being faith in our work, in our duty, in our mission, faith (as Jesus liked to put it) that we are "sent"; and ends by being faith in Him Who sent us. And surely our study of the outlook of the men at the battle-front was enough to convince us that every essential seed of this faith was present, potentially, in their hearts, and in the hearts of all true men. There is, moreover, one other element in the soldiers' outlook which seems to lead up in a definite way to the full assurance of Christian faith, and that is their persistent refusal, even in so dire circumstances, to worry about the future. "We realise at the Front," so ran one passage which you will remember, "that the issues of life and death aren't in our hands. . . . But just because we do the only right thing and realise that every-

thing else is out of our power, there comes to us a peace and content. We take the *one step* and trust the rest. . . . It is the beginning of the peace of God.” *Do what's up to you and don't worry*—such was the sentiment that was always on these men’s lips ; and at least two of the writers whom I cited in my first chapter comment on its fundamental agreement with that word of Christ’s which sums up so much of His message: Μὴ μεριμνᾶτε, —“ Be not troubled,” “ Take no thought.”

The result of our inquiry, then, is a recovery of the glad assurance that Christianity, when properly understood, is an outlook on life which is never very far away from the mind and the mood of all true-hearted workers. Indeed, if it were anything else, it could not be regarded as having anything like an unconditional claim upon our allegiance ; for I, at least, should take it as axiomatic that the only

faith which can be required of us, and the only faith which it is in any wise blame-worthy not to possess, is the faith that is born of dutiful devotion to our appointed task and unwavering loyalty to our highest values—what Tennyson calls the “faith that comes of self-control.”

Speaking once more of the soldiers’ religion, Bishop Neville Talbot says :

“ They have found a purpose to which they cleave, something to give themselves away for. Only it is hardly acknowledged, but rather lies below the level of mental apprehension and expression.”

And then he adds finely :

“ It is the function of Christianity to raise this unacknowledging trustfulness and self-giving out of dumb unconsciousness, and to give it speech, and to crown it with the glory of fully human self-devotion. It is its part to declare that it is God Whom they find

in the offering up of themselves, His purpose to which they can cleave, His will to be done—and that to give Him joy is the supreme end of man.”<sup>1</sup>

But what now of those who feel themselves unable to rise even to such a faith as this? What of those sincere but doubting souls who, though prizing all things lovely and of good report, and abiding steadfastly by the duty they know, yet cannot attain to any measure of trust in the reality of an Eternal Goodness? Well, perhaps the reason why they do not find what they are seeking is that they are looking for the wrong thing. If part of the seeming unfaith that is in the world is due to disloyalty and sin, part of it is due also to misunderstanding and to confusion of thought and to the sophistication wrought by false philosophical preconceptions. Therefore let every true-hearted

<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts on Religion at the Front*, pp. 27-28.

doubter be of good cheer. Let him remember that the children of the Most High are known, not by their opinions, but by their fruits. Let him remember that, after all, what matters most is to have a loving heart and a helping hand. Let him remember how it is plainly written for his special comfort that "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him."<sup>1</sup> And perhaps faith in God will not always tarry. Perhaps one day he will find that it has come to him unawares. Nay, perhaps it is with him even now, though he knows it only under some other and poorer name; and then some day the knowledge will come to him, with joy and gladness, that what he has all along been believing in, and resting upon, and living by, is nothing less than God's very Self; and he will say of his life what Jacob said of Bethel

<sup>1</sup> *I John*, ii, 10.

when morning broke, “ Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not ; . . . This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

“ Some may perchance, with strange surprise,  
Have blundered into Paradise.  
In vasty dusk of life abroad,  
They fondly thought to err from God,  
Nor knew the circle that they trod ;  
And, wandering all the night about,  
Found them at morn where they set out.  
Death dawned ; Heaven lay in prospect wide :—  
Lo ! they were standing by His side ! ” <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Francis Thompson, *A Judgment of Heaven*, Epilogue



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